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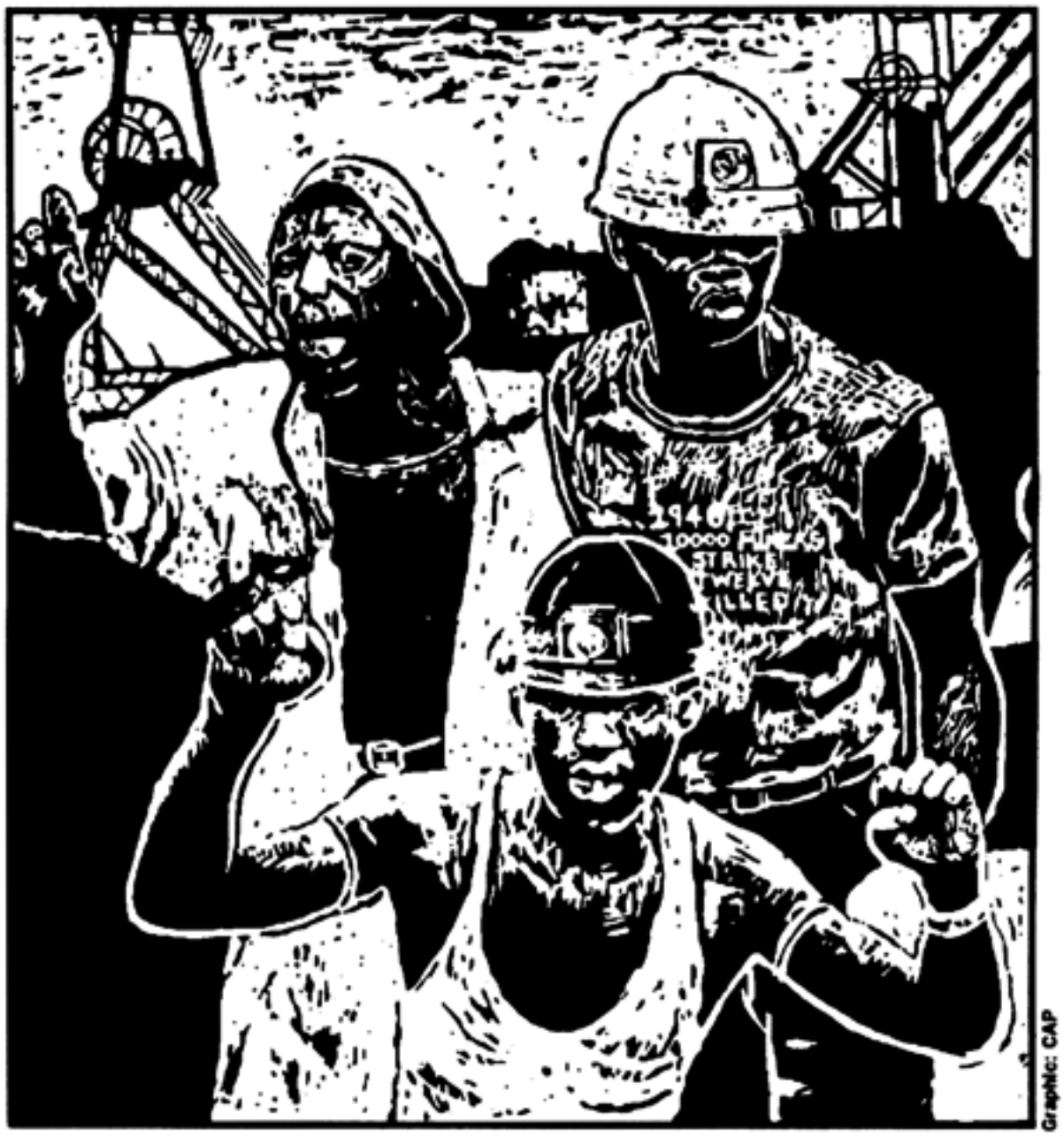

An interim government NOW!

The Cubans negotiating with the Pretoria regime in the late 1980s observed that what was happening on the battlefield in southern Angola was always reflected at the negotiating table. When the apartheid regime felt that it had a chance of a military victory, its negotiators became uncooperative. But when the tide began to turn, especially after Cuito Cuanavale in April 1989, there was a different atmosphere. It was all sweetness and smiles.

The example is instructive. Should the SACP and its tripartite allies abandon the church and business sponsored peace process, and the wider negotiations process in the light of the Inkathagate scandal? The answer must surely be: NO.

The disclosure that the regime has

funded two Inkatha rallies to the sum of R250 000 and UWUSA to the sum of at least R1,5-million is a scandal. But it hardly comes as a surprise to us. In fact, we know this is merely the tip of the iceberg. When we entered into the current peace process, we did so publicly accusing the regime of more than the funding of rallies. The regime has been actively colluding in Inkatha violence, and in some cases its agents have posed as Inkatha while carrying out massacres and assassinations.

So what has changed with the Inkathagate revelations? Very little, and a great deal.

As the July issue of *Umsebenzi* noted, already before the latest revelations, De Klerk had blundered tactically. After riding the crest of a wave for most of last year and the early months of this year, De Klerk became over-confident. At the very least he connived in the terrible massacres perpetrated by Inkatha and his own security forces. The violence worked well for him, at least for some months. His ally Buthelezi stabbed his way on to the national political stage. Meanwhile, here in South Africa and internationally, the violence was projected as a Zulu vs. Xhosa, Inkatha vs. ANC faction fight. De Klerk, for his part, was portrayed as being neutrally and wisely above this affair.

But De Klerk blundered. The sheer scale of the violence; the growing evidence that Inkatha was overwhelmingly to blame; the obvious bias of the apartheid security forces, and their unwillingness to curb Inkatha; Gerrit Viljoen's notorious comment, at the height of the massacres, that Inkatha "is a factor for peace" — all of these became too much even for some of De Klerk's best friends to stomach.

Afrikaans newspapers began to wonder aloud about De Klerk's unwillingness to ban Inkatha from publicly carrying dangerous weapons. President George Bush sent secret letters to both De Klerk and Buthelezi telling them to cool it.

Suddenly, De Klerk found that he was in danger of falling off the wave he was riding. It was at this point that he unilaterally called his Pretoria peace conference. He wanted to show that he was concerned about the violence, but he also wanted to continue to project his government as a neutral referee above the violence.

The dismal failure of De Klerk's peace conference deepened his problems. Within weeks he was compelled to join the church and business sponsored peace process, as just another player in the process.

Now, the Inkathagate revelations must serve to lock the regime and Inkatha even more firmly into a meaningful peace process. We need to emerge from this process with clear and, above all, enforceable codes of conduct for political organisations and the security forces.

We need to ensure that there is a whole series of checks and balances, in the shape of impartial enforcement mechanisms: ombudsmen over the police, a standing commission on violence, and multi-party peace committees at the national, regional and local levels. As many public windows as possible must be opened up on the security forces.

Our ANC-led alliance has nothing to fear, and everything to gain from the fullest democratisation of politics, and from an immediate ending to all political violence. Our best defence against regime and Inkatha violence is political. The political price they pay for any violence must become prohibitive.

The Inkathagate revelations have also established a much more favourable climate

to win support across a very wide spectrum for our immediate political demands. A few months ago, when the ANC issued its Open Letter, much of the commercial media, and many political actors criticised the demands as 'unrealistic', as 'posturing'.

Now, those very same demands, and especially the demand for an interim government of national unity to supervise the transition process is being taken up by an extremely wide range of forces.

The revelations of the last weeks, De Klerk's refusal to open his billions of rands worth of secret funding to public scrutiny, the regime's admission that it broke its own solemn commitments in terms of the 1989 New York Accords by funding anti-SWAPO election campaigns — all of these underline that this regime is devious, underhand, unscrupulous, and thoroughly incapable of being a neutral supervisor of a transition to democracy.

The dogs bark — our 70th birthday present

Back in the early 1980s "Terror" Lekota, referring to critics of the newly launched UDF, observed that dogs don't bark at stationary vehicles.

So, if you want to know if you are going forward, listen for dogs. The quicker you go, the larger your vehicle, the more dogs you will gather around you and the louder will be their barking.

Today, the SACP is certainly in motion.

We have been treated to a lot of barking in the last month. Gerrit Viljoen, Idasa director Alex Boraine, *The Citizen* newspaper, foreign diplomats and many more have been howling away. The reason? They had hoped that the ANC and COSATU conferences would produce signs of, at least, a growing tension between communists and non-communists.

Exactly the opposite has happened. Both the ANC and COSATU have emerged stronger and more united from their conferences. In Durban at the beginning of July, in one of the most democratic political conferences ever seen in South Africa, some 2000 ANC delegates delivered a powerful vote of confidence in a large number of well known SACP members for the ANC NEC.

One of the most common howls, coming from a whole series of "new friends of the ANC", is that the ANC-SACP alliance "scares away" middle-class whites, coloureds and Indians from the ANC. Pallo Jordan, one of the most prominent non-communist members of the ANC leadership, had a succinct answer.

"Yes, to all these groupings the continuation of the alliance might well present a problem. But don't forget that to 75% of the population it is not a problem at all. We are not going to cut our cloth to suit the political tastes of others. We are not going to cut loose an old and reliable friend for the sake of new friendships - which are not even secure. We have a powerful working class support base and we will not lose sight of the fact."

70 years ago, on July 30 1921, at 20 Plein Street in Cape Town, the first Communist Party on the continent of Africa was launched. It had small beginnings. At first it was almost entirely rooted among militant white workers. But, by the mid-1920s, the party had become overwhelmingly, in terms of its membership, an African working class organisation.

In the late 1920s the party took the crucial strategic step of linking its struggle for socialism to the national democratic struggle of the oppressed majority of our country. The party, it resolved, "should pay particular attention to the embryonic organisations among the natives, such as the African National Congress.

The party, while retaining its full independence, should participate in these organisations, should seek to broaden and extend their activity. Our aim should be to transform the ANC into a fighting nationalist revolutionary organisation against the white bourgeoisie and the British imperialists..."

Today the SACP faces many challenges. We are emerging painfully out of 40 years of illegality. We are only just beginning to transform our support base into organised structures. We are now operating in a world in which communism is supposed to be "dead". Yet, despite all of this, the communist party in South Africa has never enjoyed more prestige, and in terms of signed on membership, it has never been larger.

If they were around, those early communist pioneers of the 1920s would have reason to be proud.

No wonder the dogs are howling.

Internationally: Aluta continua

The SACP has never tried to run away from the reality of the major crisis for socialism represented by the events in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union over the last two and a half years. In the Soviet Union and in Yugoslavia the crisis continues to deepen. In Cuba, under the strangle-hold of thirty years of US sanctions and now without the assistance of the former socialist economic community, Comecon, the revolution is struggling through some of its most difficult hours.

But there are also gathering signs of a regrouping and a re-emergence of confidence among the forces of the left in many parts of the world. The June meeting in Mexico of 62 parties and movements of the left, from 22 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, represents one major indicator of this return of confidence. What was significant about this meeting was the wide spectrum of different left tendencies represented. There can be no left renaissance world-wide if we remain bunkered within our old trenches - communist, social-democratic, trotskyist.

In May this year, in a parliamentary election result that passed totally unnoticed by our local commercial press, the communist party of Cyprus (the Progressive Party of Working People - AKEL) raised its electoral support from 27,4% (1985) to 30,6%. AKEL won just two seats less than the victorious Democratic Rally/Liberal Party alliance. The results confounded most commentators who had predicted that

AKEL would suffer a significant drop in support, because of the events in eastern Europe.

AKEL attributes its electoral success to its ongoing close contact with the people, and to renewal and the broadening of democracy within the party.

Of course, world-wide, these remain small signs. But, meanwhile, that magic ju-ju called the "free market" continues to exact its toll on the working people of our globe. In eastern Europe mass unemployemt, soaring inflation and a drop into third world conditions are the fruits that the "free market" is dispensing to all those tens of thousands who thought they were marching into the first world.

In Britain, the Thatcher years have left a dismal legacy. As one commentator notes ironically: "A decade after it emerged from the worst recession in the postwar era, Britain is mired deep in the second worst recession since world war two. It is a remarkable achievement of the Thatcher governments to have engineered two recessions of such power in such a short space of time."

It is typical of the colonial mentality of the ruling class here in South Africa that, in their desperate attempt to be cosmopolitan, they parade about in yesterday's fashions. They feted Margaret Thatcher on her recent trip to South Africa as a great economic luminary.

The fact is, even in its home base, the British Conservative Party is trying to distance itself from Thatcherism. No wonder, the leading free market economies based on the Thatcherist principles of raw individualism, deregulation and unfettered financial markets - the US and UK - are in the throes of recession.

Speaking of the US, despite its wealth and military power, its social fabric continues to decay. Its present prison population now tops one million and the figure is growing by 13% each year. Even more shocking is a recent statistic showing that one quarter (yes, ONE QUARTER) of all black US males between the ages of 19 and 30 are either in jail or are being processed by the criminal justice system! These are the fruits of the US free market system, where federal spending on education programmes for deprived communities has been cut by 25% in the last decade - while the spending on funds to fight crime has risen 30% in the same time.

Here in South Africa it is crucial that socialists begin to cast off any inferiority complexes that the last few years on the international scene might have produced. Yes, there has been a severe crisis in international socialism. Yes, we will not run away from that reality. But how brilliant is the capitalist alternative? Today, in the rich countries of the west, 40 million people are unemployed, 100 million live in poverty.

We say no to the political tyranny of a bureaucratic, anti-democratic socialist model. But equally, we say no to the economic tyranny of the uncaring, anti-people "free market" systems.

A LUTA CONTINUA! ★

Beyond the stereotype: The SACP in the past, present and future

By Joe Slovo

This is the text of a speech delivered by Joe Slovo at the University of Western Cape to mark the 70th anniversary of the SACP, 19 July 1991.

In ten days time our Party celebrates its 70th anniversary. Three score years and ten is the biblical allotment of human lifespan. And those on the other side of our political divide would very much like us to fulfil the biblical prophecy so that we can meet our maker at the earliest.

But they will be disappointed. We are here to stay. They failed to strangle us at birth. They failed to wipe us out by 40 years of illegality. They were forced to unban us coupled with the hope that the Eastern European events would lead to our demise. But we are stronger than we have ever been and we remain confident that they will fail to negate our role both now and in the future.

Wherein lies our strength? We have a vision of society whose time will undoubtedly come, a socialist society in which one person does not live off the labour of another. And that time will come not because our Party exists but because our working people — the most wretched of our society — will in the end ensure the creation of both a political and economic democracy in our country. That is the essence of what we stand for.

There is no political party which has so openly and rigorously addressed its past as we have done. And in major respects we did so long before the Gorbachev revolution. This capacity to learn from the past is one of our greatest strengths as we move into the future.

But all this does not absolve us from addressing those who remain sceptical because of certain aspects of our past. There are certainly some rather murky skeletons in our historical cupboard. We are confident, however, that when you put our whole record into the historical balance you will unravel the mystery as to why uniquely, in contrast to the slide elsewhere, our Party has maintained and even increased its popularity.

It is against this background that I proceed to touch on some of the negative and

'We have a vision of society whose time will undoubtedly come, a socialist society in which one person does not live off the labour of another'

positive features of our 70 years of history.

We were born in the white workers labour movement and this reflected itself in questionable policies in the very early stages, an example of which was the 1922 white miners strike.

We went through a period during which we absorbed what was described as "Leninism" without realising that much of it was wrapping paper for Stalinism. Lenin was undoubtedly the greatest revolutionary this century. He used Marxism as it should be used, as a tool to deal with the concrete reality of his country. But many of Lenin's propositions which referred to special moments in the history of a specific struggle were perpetuated to serve the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The leading role of a communist party was encoded in the law and the constitution giving it the right to lead and rule in perpetuity. It was a party which, at the end of the day, was not even answerable to the class it claimed to represent. Democratic centralism was denuded of its democratic content and became centralism, pure and simple. The relationship between the party and the social organisations was degraded; they became little more than transmission belts for party policy.

The single party state came to be accepted as a permanent feature of society and not as a passing historic phase. A style of ideological polemic emerged which prohibited any questioning of the wisdom of the leading organ and was absolutely dismissive of all contrary views.

We cannot deny that these distortions,

which came to be rationalised as a legitimate part of revolutionary Marxism in most parts of the world, also impinged themselves on our own practice. It led to a degree of intolerance, exclusiveness and elitism. Our external policies were dominated by blind adherence to the decisions of the Soviet Communist Party; a practice which took root during the period when all affiliates of the CPSU-dominated Comintern were obliged to follow its decisions.

Some of our negative practices were imposed upon us by the framework in which we were forced to operate. For example, during the 40 years of illegality we could not engage in complete inner-party democracy. I stress this point because it is precisely during such periods when unavoidable practices imposed by the situation are entrenched and become habits; they tend to continue unless the greatest vigilance is exercised when the situation changes.

But with regard to these negative tendencies in the international communist movement, our Party, to its credit, consciously moved towards some of the key foundations of perestroika long before it was initiated by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union.

As far back as 1970 we rejected the Stalinist concept of a party which has a monopoly of wisdom and a natural and exclusive right to lead its constituency. We emphasised then that our claim to lead the workers must be earned and re-earned through democratic, open political contest.

This fresh approach to the concept of vanguard led in a straight line to our policy of multi-party democracy and a rejection of the single party state of self-perpetuating power with all its implications for corruption and dictatorship. This commitment found expression in our latest programme adopted before the East European collapse.

Nowhere was our departure from Stalinism more evident than in our theory and practice, of at least 50 years standing, of how a communist party should relate to other social and political organisations.

We ceased long ago to treat other organisations as mere conduit pipes or transmission belts for our policy. And this, by the way, unravels another secret, our long-standing alliance with the ANC to which I will return.

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At the theoretical level, using Marxism as a tool and not as a catechism, our Party developed its truly indigenous theory of the South African revolution based on its conception of colonialism of a special type. This analysis led to our commitment to the national democratic transformation of our country as a stage towards socialism. It also informed our definition of who the main enemy was, which are the main forces for change and the multi-class character of the immediate struggle. For us, the question was not whether we are engaged in class or national struggle. What we did was to address the class content of the national struggle and the national content of the class struggle in our specific conditions. Another important contribution was to spread the concept of true liberation as going beyond the political and embracing also economic democracy.

It should not be forgotten that this ideological contribution impacted itself in a very real way on the whole national and democratic movement. It helped transform the ANC from its early beginnings of petition politics into a revolutionary nationalist movement.

Translated into revolutionary practice, our theoretical concepts had far-reaching implications. Among the most important of these implications was the Party's commitment to help build a powerful African National Congress as head of the whole national democratic struggle. It also led to the creation of a long-standing alliance between the Party and the ANC based on complete respect for each other's independence and inner-democracy.

As an independent Party we can truly claim to be the pioneers of some of the key democratic aspirations which are today taken for granted by the vast majority of South Africa's people. We are the undisputed pioneers of genuine non-racial political organisation. This was as far back as the middle 20's when our Party broke with its origins in the white labour movement. We were pioneers too of a vision of non-racial democracy. As far back as 1929 - even before the ANC - we put forward the demand for majority rule. No one can dispute that for the last 70 years, when black trade unions were regarded as treasonable conspiracies, our Party and its members trudged the length and breadth of our country, laying the historical foundations for the powerful trade union movement which has now emerged.

As I have said our internationalism embraced a rather mechanical adherence to Soviet foreign policy. But internally our commitment to internationalism always put us in the front rank of the struggle against racism, tribalism, narrow chauvinism and regionalism. By and large communists played a seminal role in combatting these tendencies. When the time came for armed combat as part of the political struggle our Party, together with the ANC, created Umkhonto we Sizwe, and the names of hundreds of communists are inscribed on the roll of honour of those who died, who were wounded and imprisoned during the armed struggle.

In the late 1980s, when the whole movement was called upon to address the question of the transformation in more concrete terms, our Party played no small part. We helped articulate the basis for a post-apartheid society, including principles of multi-party democracy and a mixed economy.

The present

So much for the past. What of the present?

Our Party is busy examining the impact of the changes that have taken place on some of our basic ideological concepts. It is for example clear that the thesis of colonialism of a special type needs to be looked at. It was based in the reality that despite 1910 the status of blacks as a colonial people was perpetuated. Even though inherited national domination remains a fact of life, does the concept still hold in the same way in the light of the rapid political transformations which we are going through? Perhaps the time has come for more emphasis to be placed on the class content of the continuous quest for national liberation. Whatever conclusions we reach it is imperative that the multi-class approach in regard to the main forces for change remains in place. Precisely because this is so the existence of the Party and the trade union movement, as independent forces and as

part of the alliance, has become more vital than ever. It is more imperative that working class aspirations do not end up at the bottom of the pile in a post-apartheid South Africa.

Another problem with which we are grappling is to define more precisely the role of the Party as an independent force in the light of the broad consensus which exists within the liberation alliance on the character of post-apartheid South Africa and the strategy and tactics required to get there. We are also embarked upon an internal discussion on the relationship between the post-apartheid economy and our ultimate vision of a socialist South Africa. We are confident that at our forthcoming congress in December these issues will find more definitive answers. What I am attempting to emphasise is the open-minded way in which our Party is ready to examine its policies in the light of the emerging new realities.

There is currently an unprecedented offensive against the Party and its role in the tripartite alliance. It is alleged that we have the ANC in our pockets. The ultra-left, by the way, attack us for being in the pockets of the ANC. The recent ANC conference resulted in renewed media speculation about communists in the ANC and their role.

It is universally accepted that the elections at this conference were the most democratic the country has ever seen. Yet the innuendo is spread that the reason for the election of a large number of communists to the NEC is that we organised a caucus.

If this were so, is it conceivable that our highly professional investigative press could not produce a shred of evidence from at least one of the 2000 delegates that they received an instruction from the Party leadership on the voting? Even more sinister in some of the comments on the conference is the implication that if a democratic election produces a result which those in power do not like, they will use that power to subvert the democratic process.

So if democracy has had its day in a most fulsome measure, what else is the complaint?

The alliance

There is mealy-mouthed concern that, because of its alliance with our Party, the ANC is risking some support from whites, Indians, Coloureds and the international community. The answer to this is in the finding of the recent Markinor Gallup-related poll, which showed 68 percent support, plus a possible 15 percent for the ANC. Presumably, those who gave the thumbs-up for the ANC did so in full knowledge of the alliance, despite 40 years of an unending flow of poisonous propaganda while the Party was banned. The attack on the Party and the Alliance is really an attack on those objectives of the ANC, which are regarded as a threat to accumulated privilege, and the Party is falsely seen as the sole initiator of such policies. Together with violence, the attack on the Party and Alliance is part of the major offensive against the ANC itself, and should be recognised as such by all democrats.

We accept that if a percentage of whites, Indians and Coloureds have reservations about aspects of policy which they consider to be Party influenced, this concern has to be addressed.

We proudly plead guilty to having played a part in influencing the ANC in its stand for the poor and its bias in favour of the black working people. Our detractors live in the hope that a break with the SACP will reverse this emphasis. There may be similar

reservations among a section of the better-off blacks about other aspects of ANC aspirations. But the test of a policy is whether it is right and adheres to principle and not whether it panders to prejudice or to vested interests. What gives politics a bad name is the concept of canvassing support opportunistically and the buying of votes through unprincipled electioneering.

But I do concede that we are called upon to grasp a real nettle and that is the interweaving of membership (especially at leadership level) between the two independent political formations. This was graphically put by President De Klerk when he expressed his discomfort at the thought of getting into a scrum with a scrambled egg. The mind of course boggled at the additional thought that President De Klerk's own pack would clearly be a farmer's breakfast of the National Party and the Broederbond. But rugby aside, I believe we are called upon to address the concerns about this type of relationship for a number of reasons.

In the first place, it is an unusual relationship. But it has its roots in our concrete conditions. Our history has been interwoven by more than 40 years of illegal conditions. There are indeed few people in the ANC, if any, who do not see those years of alliance and the participation of communists in the ANC as extremely fruitful and in the interests of the ANC and the liberation struggle in general.

In the second place, on the face of it, there are undoubtedly risks of a double discipline. Fear is expressed about who, at the end of the day, determines ANC policy. The answer lies not in theory, but in the style which has been elaborated over the years of the way communists have played their role at all levels in the ANC, including at leadership level. Those who have had this experience - including non-communists like Chief Luthuli, Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela and others - are aware that the strength of the alliance lies in the fact that communists in the ANC have always totally subjected themselves to ANC discipline and authority, the inner-democracy of the ANC and have never worked as an organised faction.

Following the steps of Moses Kotane, the Party leadership has on no occasion instructed Party members to adopt specific positions on any aspect of ANC policy. All members of the Party argue their points of view without any form of mandate. Those non-communists who sit at these meetings frequently observe known leaders of the Party adopting completely contrary positions on some very fundamental issues. This in our view is a sign of a healthy and vigorous debate we encourage when trying to find solutions to the difficult problems facing us. If the Party has any position to put

to the ANC, it does so as a Party on a formal basis when the two leaderships meet in the alliance collectives. The Party leadership did not, for example, have a single discussion on the issues which would arise at the last ANC conference either in respect of policy or voting.

So, if you have nothing to hide (we are told) why don't you at least provide a full list of those of your members who occupy influential positions in the ANC and other democratic organisations?

Those who unceasingly beat this drum accompany it with the refrain that the SACP is now legal and should no longer fear complete exposure of its membership. But we all know that the same refrain was heard unceasingly during our long period of illegality and there is no doubt that the motivation behind the refrain was precisely the same: to use the participation of communists as a stick to beat both the ANC and the Party.

It is a matter of historic record that prior to our banning in 1950 there was not a single secret communist. For 40 years we were forced to work in the cellars. We were selected as the key targets of slander and repression. We were attacked by the very same people for working in the shadows.

It is the task of our independent party to ensure that in an inter-party line-up of forces, working class interests are not swamped, and that the working class is organised as a powerful constituency

Transition period

Be that as it may, we are now grappling with the transition period with its new demands. We are leading up to our first legal congress in 40 years in December of this year; a congress which will elect a new leadership and adopt a new programme and constitution. And I for one am committed to the proposition that from that point onwards there will be no secret party members. Those who have socialist commitments but who, whether for personal or political reasons, cannot fit into this new phase should have our respect even though they may not be our members.

There are those, many of whom are motivated by sincere inquiries, who pose the following question: since there is broad agreement between the ANC and SACP on the shape of a post-apartheid South Africa and also on how to get there, why does the SACP not just fold up and leave it to the ANC?

Our answer is clear. We have no double agenda. As a Party we do not hide our socialist objectives. It is our duty to spread the message of an ultimate socialist society now. In this respect we differ from the ANC even though the differences are non-antagonistic. In addition, it should be remembered that the alliance between the two organisations is based not merely on immediate political consensus but has its roots in the inter-class nature of the current struggle. It is the task of our independent Party to ensure that in this inter-class line-up of forces, working class interests are not swamped, that the working class is organised as a powerful constituency and that the choices which are being debated for future development will be made in a way that will not prejudice the working class whom we claim to represent.

All this calls for a strong, healthy, independent trade union movement and a po-

litical party of the working class such as ours.

If and when elections come, we as a Party will certainly participate. Whether we do so as part of an existing alliance, or a broader patriotic front, or a coalition, or on a completely independent platform, depends on many variables, including the specifics of a future electoral system. The alliance between the SACP and the ANC is, we are convinced, more solid that it has ever been.

But an alliance is not like a Catholic marriage, and the way it will operate in future conditions is a matter which will only be fruitfully addressed when those conditions emerge.

Finally, let me reiterate our complete confidence that ultimately South Africa will arrive at a socialist system. Existing socialism failed because it was separated from democracy. We believe that democratic socialism is the only rational future for humankind. And we will continue to propagate it and to work for conditions in which it can be realised in a future South Africa. ★

In their own words...

'If you speak to National Party members, they seem to believe that the NP in an alliance with other forces can win an election. If this is true, then why is the NP leadership so heavily opposed to such an election right now for a Constituent Assembly? Why not just hold a one-person one-vote election, win it and push through their constitution?' — Pieter Mulder, Conservative Party MP for Schweizer-Reneke.

Manufacturing a reformist ANC

By Ben Molapo

'ANC must get its house in order, says De Klerk" (*The Star*, 12 June 1991). "ANC must heed rules of politics: Kobie" *(The Citizen*, 10 May 1991). "ANC has still to convert into political party - Viljoen" (*The Citizen*, 16 May 1991). These recent newspaper clippings tell a story.

From the side of the regime, our liberation movement is receiving a barrage of patronising and unsolicited advice.

What is it all about?

The British based journal, *The Economist*, captured it in its own way. The government, it said, is trying to "manage a revolution against itself".

But what *The Economist* didn't say is that a carefully managed revolution against oneself is not a revolution. It is only **the appearance** of a revolution.

So how might the government get away with the mere appearance of fundamental change in our country? It has two basic options:

- either it eliminates the ANC more or less entirely as a serious political factor;
- or it manufactures a totally transformed, in fact a thoroughly reformist ANC.

De Klerk has probably not entirely ruled out the first option. If it were possible, he would prefer it. But it is the second option that is almost certainly his major objective for the present.

There has been a sophisticated attempt by a number of political commentators and self-styled 'friends of the ANC' to manufacture a reformist ANC

Political commentator, Hermann Giliomee confidently outlines this objective as a more or less certain outcome:

"Without the charismatic appeal ... of the ANC there will be little hope of confronting the problems in the schools and townships... (in other words, De Klerk needs the ANC ...but) As the ANC understands that a transfer of power is not on the agenda, and as it realises that mass mobilisation campaigns fail to win itself new members, the revolutionary elements in the movement will become weakened and isolated." [1]

The ANC, in short, will be compelled to lend its name and symbols, its "charisma", to a process of change managed by the white boss, De Klerk.

To achieve all of this the ANC has to be transformed into a docile partner. The attempt to transform the ANC in this way involves a whole range of interventions - the violence (see, in particular the recent revelations of Major Nico Basson, former South African military agent); political campaigns to discredit and undermine the unity of the ANC; and a subtle attempt to manufacture

for the ANC a new reformist outlook.

It is this last mentioned that we wish to look at in detail in this paper.

Manufacturing a reformism

This task is, of course, not taken on directly by the regime itself. It is left to a range of commentators and political actors, some of whom cynically or sincerely present themselves as "friends of the ANC".

What is the essence of this reformist outlook? It consists in a particular strategic perspective on the present, and it can be summarised under five headings:

1. It has as its fundamental starting point the view that there is a basic convergence of outlook between De Klerk's government and the liberation movement. This convergence of outlook presents us with a unique opportunity to achieve the basic aims of our national democratic revolution. Of course, intelligent reformists are not arguing that there is a total convergence. They are not denying the need for a certain amount of tactical sparring with the other side. But, so they believe, De Klerk is prepared to concede all the major objectives of our national democratic struggle. The sooner we get on with the negotiations the better.

2. From this it follows that the major enemy of meaningful democratic change is **not** De Klerk's government, nor its immediate allies, like the IFP. Instead, the major enemy is seen to be the ultra-right, the most reactionary elements in white society who are opposed to negotiations. These ultra-right elements have a significant presence inside the SADF and SAP. They have the capacity to block and reverse the negotiating process, turning the clock back to pre-February 1990. **Therefore, so the reformist perspective logically goes, we need to be very careful not to weaken De Klerk too much.**

3. From this it also naturally follows that, if the ultra-right is the greatest threat to democratic change, **militant mass action from our side is the second greatest threat.** Militancy weakens the doves on the other

Hawks and doves: A reformist role would leave the ANC powerless, and the tripartite alliance broken and confused.

side. It strengthens the ultra-right. The ANC alliance "must move away from protest politics", into "normal" politics. That is, we must move into a politics of horse-trading behind closed doors. This is a politics of elites "delivering" their respective, and relatively passive, constituencies.

4. Since there is already a basic strategic convergence between De Klerk and ourselves, many of the "details" of the negotiating process are relatively unimportant. Our immediate demands, for the fulfilment of the basic preconditions for substantive constitutional negotiations, or for an Interim Government and a democratically elected Constituent Assembly, are negotiable and we can compromise upon them.

5. In regard to international pressure, reformism views it in a similar light to mass action at home - it musn't be "overdone". "We must give credit where credit is due". We must help De Klerk carry through his reform programme, rewarding each step with a carrot, with a strategic relaxation of international isolation. This will enable De Klerk to carry as much of the white constituency with him as possible.

As you can see, a relatively coherent reformist argument can be advanced. But, at the end of the day, this position is profoundly wrong, and therefore profoundly dangerous to our cause.

Countering reformism

The reformist perspective that we have attempted to portray is based on two fundamental errors:

A. It completely misunderstands (or cynically misrepresents) the regime's objectives in the present negotiations process.

B. It seriously underestimates our own strength.

Let us consider each of these errors in some detail.

A. Misunderstanding the regime's intentions in the negotiations

De Klerk and his government have not embarked on the negotiations process because they now believe in the broad objectives of our national democratic revolution. They are not sitting down at the table to hand over power. On the contrary, they are negotiating and reforming in order to conserve as much of white power and privilege as possible. Above all they hope to block the advance of the national democratic transformation.

Given the previous record of the National Party we should not be surprised at this. We need only look back to the history of the Nkomati Accord with Mozambique to see that the NP has a history of duplicity whenever it has negotiated in the past.

The NP government has a long track record of saying one thing publicly and acting differently behind the scenes. Even when it has lost a particular struggle, it has tried to salvage the situation. Using clandestine methods, provocation and false leaks to the press has always been part of its style of rule and of negotiating.

For example, in the run-up to the Namibian elections the SADF, through just one of its agents, secretly spent over R1-million to undermine the democratic process. [2] And let us not forget the bogus radio messages that the SADF "intercepted" on the eve of the elections and which were "revealed" with so much gusto by Pik Botha, claiming that SWAPO was about to invade. One of the military intelligence officers involved in these Namibian campaigns, Major Nico Basson, has said:

"None of the structures, front organisations and special agents of the government

that were used against SWAPO in Namibia have been disbanded or retired. On the contrary, they are actively involved in the process in South Africa." [3]

Saying one thing, doing another

An article in the NP Sunday newspaper, *Rapport*, recently outlined the government's tactical approach to reform. It is based on three tactics:

- Keep the two extremes of the political spectrum happy at the same time.
- "Say one thing, but do the other. Keep simultaneously, a whole lot of options open in political struggle.
- "But above all, never allow the people to realise what you are really doing." [4]

The last point is particularly important. "Never allow the people to realise what you are really doing". Well what are they hiding from us? What are they really doing?

This is not too difficult to discover - when De Klerk takes time to talk to his white voters, he often exposes himself. For example, an advertisement paid for by the NP states: "the (future) political dispensation must incorporate guarantees and mechanisms which will clearly make domination by a majority ... impossible." [5]

The government is demonstrating that it is not genuinely interested in negotiating majority rule and an end to white minority domination. Rather it has entered negotiations with the aim of ensuring continued minority privilege and a minority veto on democracy. This was made clear again in a speech by De Klerk to white voters just before the Maitland by-election, when he said that "the National Party has the power to prevent the acceptance of a constitution which goes against the values the party stands for." [6]

The government is not genuinely interested in negotiating majority rule and an end to minority domination. It has entered negotiations with the aim of ensuring continued minority privilege and a veto on democracy.

While this is what De Klerk says to reassure whites, his security forces are already using this power against the ANC. The emergence of Inkatha as an armed force is yet another demonstration of the intention of the apartheid state to develop new buffer forces to ensure it survival. Instead of being prepared to accept the democratic outcome of negotiations, the NP, which according to all opinion polls has the support of 15% or less of the population, assigns to itself the role of determining the future of our country.

De Klerk and his government remain the greatest threat to achieving the basic objectives of a national democratic transition. This is not to say that other elements, like the ultra-right, pose no threat whatsoever. But it is a grave error to see these ultra-right forces as our principal antagonist, while De Klerk is an ally. If our efforts are primarily targeted at weakening the ultra-right, we will give De Klerk, who has all the resources of state power at his disposal, a free hand. We will allow him to determine all the rules of the game, the character, the pace and general direction of the reform process. Rather than laying the basis for a national democratic transition, we will find ourselves blocked and outmanoeuvred.

In short, there is no simple convergence of strategic perspective between De Klerk and ourselves. But does this mean that, in opposing reformist illusions about De Klerk's motivations, we reject negotiations?

Understanding the negotiations process

Let us state quite categorically that our opposition to the reformist position is NOT based on an opposition to negotiations.

In fact, the negotiation process presents very real possibilities for a meaningful democratic advance, **provided we understand and handle the process correctly**. Above all, the struggle is over initiative, the struggle is over who mainly determines the rules of the game.

On the negotiations front we began well with the Harare Declaration. But do we still retain the initiative?

We have often said in the recent past that negotiations are a site of struggle. This is correct. We have also often said that negotiations are just ONE site of struggle. This is also correct, but it can give rise to an incorrec. practical approach.

We must not imagine that there is a series of more or less **unconnected** sites of struggle, permitting a gentlemen's agreement within our movement, each to their own: Let the reformists negotiate, let the militants build self-defence units, and let the MDM comrades get on with mass action. This kind of parallelism would be disastrous. In the present situation, the negotiation process colours every single aspect of our struggle. Unless we have a coherent strategy that relates all sites of struggle to our overall objective of transfer of power to the people, we will be outwitted by De Klerk at every turn.

This brings us to the critical question of the Constituent Assembly and Interim Government.

If we accept the reformist perspective that there is a fundamental convergence between De Klerk and ourselves, then our demand for an Interim Government and a democratic Constituent Assembly become mere bargaining chips. But if we accept the other, and more accurate perspective, that the present struggle between us and the government remains central, then an altogether different picture emerges. In our view, the mechanisms of transition are absolutely critical.

This is a perspective that the regime, for its part, understands very clearly. Thus, Roelf Meyer, arguing for a Multi Party Conference (MPC), and against a Constituent Assembly and Interim Government, says quite plainly that the government sees: "itself retaining responsibility for the administration of the country and the maintenance of law and order in the interim period ... This would ensure that the MPC led to a new political formula that is something quite distinct from simple majoritarianism."[7]

Whether we are actually able to win our demands for a Constituent Assembly and an Interim Government is not a question of rhetoric. It will depend on the power we bring to bear on the negotiating process.

This brings us to the next limitation in the reformist perspective.

B. Underestimating our own strength

While the reformist trend over-estimates the progressive intentions of De Klerk, it also drastically underestimates, or perhaps, misunderstands, our own strength.

In the first place, we see this underestimation occurring on the international plane. The SATV has always tried to give the impression that the apartheid regime is less isolated than it really is. At present the SATV likes to present a picture of crumbling sanctions. The call for maintaining sanctions is presented as "a lost cause". The reformist perspective uncritically accepts this picture.

In countering this defeatism it is necessary to realise, in the first place, that the sanctions at their height were never watertight. There were numerous sanctions busters.

The point was, however, that the regime was forced to pay a premium for this backdoor trading, even if it was still able to secure many things it needed.

In addition, although there is now a bit more seepage, most of the more effective sanctions measures are still in place. The arms embargo remains relatively firm. And let us never forget that it was the arms embargo that turned the tide on the battlefields of southern Angola and throughout our region. In many respects the present conjuncture in which we are operating opened up, not with De Klerk's February 2 1991, but with Fidel Castro's Cuito Cuanavale when combined Cuban and FAPLA forces defeated the best that the SADF could muster.

Reformists argue that the ANC alliance 'must move away from protest politics'. That is, we must move into the politics of horse-trading behind closed doors... the politics of elites 'delivering' their respective constituencies

Certainly, we must not underrate the complexities and difficult challenges that the new world situation presents us. But we must equally not grossly underrate our international strengths, and the continued international anti-apartheid solidarity that we enjoy. If we underrate our support and become unduly defeatist, we will send confusing signals to our international allies. However, it is in regard to underestimating our mass strength here at home, that the reformist perspective is most in evidence.

People's struggle is our strength

The central question of every political struggle is the question of power. This involves two aspects. Firstly there is the question of the power of the state. This is what liberation struggles and especially national democratic transformations are all about: How to transfer state power. On the other hand, for a liberation movement which does not yet control the state, the question is what power do we have to ensure a transfer of power?

The policy of the ANC, at least since the Morogoro Conference of 1969, has been very clear on this issue. Our strength comes from the power of the people expressed in mass action.

However the reformists have a different perspective. Firstly they ignore the fact that the basis of our strength in the past has been organised mass action linked to the armed struggle. Rather, they tend to refer to the armed struggle in isolation and fail to mention the vital role of mass action.

Let us take the example of the journalist Hennie Serfontein, who was actively involved in covering the Namibian transition process and who is now turning his energies to manufacturing a reformist strategy for the ANC. Serfontein claims to quote an unnamed ANC NEC member as saying of the "hawks" in our ranks: "they are busy using revolutionary statements to create the wrong impression amongst our people that there is an alternative strategy to negotiations. The armed struggle was not nearly as successful as they allege."[8] In fact, of course, within the ANC there is no-one calling for an armed alternative to negotiations, but there are those calling for a firm approach

to talks.

Our whole past strategy is presented in Serfontein's so-called leaks as simply being one of isolated armed actions. Anyone who has had any understanding of the 1980s in South Africa will know it was mass action which changed the face of this country. It was the millions of ordinary people who, through the UDF and Cosatu and other formations of the MDM, brought the government to the negotiating table. This has been the source of our power. The armed struggle did play a significant role, but it was never the be-all and end-all of our struggle. And the major strategic question of the armed struggle has always been how to link it to mass action.

Anyone who has any understanding of the 1980s will know it was mass action which changed the face of this country. It was the millions of ordinary people who, through formations of the MDM, brought the government to the negotiating table.

The reason that the reformists conveniently forget about mass action is two-fold. Firstly, it is far easier to build on their argument if they can present armed action as the only alternative to negotiations. It is true that, before its suspension, the armed struggle was facing severe problems. It was necessary, at the time that the talks with the regime were beginning, to develop new approaches to the armed struggle. A new phase of the struggle was opening up and in such times there are always problems of adjustment and new strategies that have to be developed and tested. This takes time and mistakes are often made. [9] But it is also true that the first steps along this line were developing. And it is nonsense to say that the armed struggle had collapsed as certain elements now find it convenient to argue.

The second reason why reformists ignore the importance of mass action is that they mistrust the people - they are scared of the power of the people. They see negotiations, and political contest in general as an elite affair. The mobilised people are likely to rock the boat. They share Dr Gerrit Viljoen's opinion that: "It could well be asked whether successful negotiation and successful mass action are both possible at the same time." [10]

In fact, these thoughts are not always confined to the other side, or to would-be "friends of the ANC", like Serfontein. Consider the following:

"Suppose the `waves' of mass action do not obligingly behave as the planners would wish. Suppose there are provocations which lead to fresh waves, not of protest, but of violence ... Does anyone suppose that the ANC and its allies would bear this or that negotiations could survive such a disaster?" [11] These words were written by a member of both the SACP and ANC. The writer was launching a polemical attack on those he imagines to be "hawks" in our ranks, and whom he considers to be sinister manipulators of mass action, bent on derailing the negotiations process. As these words were being written, the ANC was facing the most concerted and violent attack from the state and Inkatha. The author was trying to scare us with the violent consequences of mass action. Yet, as he was writing, hundreds of people were dying and the movement was struggling to develop an organised mass response to the violence.

Lead the people, trust the people

Because of its mistrust or, at best, underes-

timation of popular power, the reformist position suggests that we conduct politics in the same scheming, back-door manner that De Klerk's NP conducts politics.

But we cannot engage in politics in the same way as De Klerk without being defeated. The option of saying one thing and doing another is, strictly speaking, not open to us. We are not a bourgeois state, backed up by police and army and by the power of private ownership of the commanding heights of economic and ideological power.

Our power does not derive from an elite monopoly over key power centres (repressive, administrative, ideological and economic). Our power derives almost entirely from mass support and mass mobilisation in South Africa, and the moral superiority of our case internationally. We have to take the masses and world opinion with us every step of the way. Public deceit weakens us and strengthens the enemy.

We must say what we mean. And we must always do, to the best of our ability, what we say. To be sure, it means that the other side is usually forewarned of our general intentions. But if deceit is their strength, openness and broad public support is our's.

The reformist role that is being prepared for the ANC in certain quarters is a recipe for defeat. It would leave the ANC powerless, and our tripartite alliance broken and confused.

Above all, it would leave the people of our country with a nice container called "the new South Africa", but inside the container their lives would barely have changed. ★

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MWT: Trying to change the ANC from within

By Jeremy Cronin

There are a number of small socialist formations in South Africa with strategic perspectives which differ in one or another way from the SACP. Most see as their main point of disagreement with the SACP our strategic alliance with the ANC. They argue that this alliance "tones down" our independent role as a socialist party seeking to represent the interests of the working class.

One socialist grouping with a slightly different critique is the self-styled "Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC". Rather than being critical of any involvement with the ANC, the MWT argues for the transformation, from within, of the ANC into a socialist workers' party.

The origins of the MWT go back several years. Some of its original members were expelled from SACTU for factionalist activity. Their membership of the ANC was also suspended. However, since the February 1990 unbanning of organisations, pockets of MWT supporters have emerged, more or less openly, in several ANC branches. The tendency also has a small presence in some trade unions, and has been associated with a "campaign for a democratic FAWU", and now a "campaign for a militant SACTWU".

Weizmann Hamilton emerged a few weeks ago in the news-room of *The Weekly Mail*. He was the first, and for the moment he is the only, publicly disclosed member of MWT in South Africa. *The African Communist* approached Hamilton for an interview, and after several weeks delay he came back to us.

"We were surprised to be approached by you guys... **especially** by you guys," he told us. "But I am prepared to do an interview."

JC: A very common allegation against the MWT is that it operates as a secretive and undemocratic caucus within the ANC and other formations. How do you respond to this?

WH: This is a false allegation. In the first place, we believe that it is both incorrect and dangerous to exaggerate the degree to which the state and the ruling class are prepared to tolerate genuine Marxist ideas. If Marxism becomes strong within the national liberation movement, it would pose a major threat to the state and ruling class. We therefore believe that we need to take necessary precautions against attacks from the state.

Of course, we must still exploit the openings created by the February 2 and subsequent reforms. These include the unbanning of organisations, and the fact that it is no longer a crime to propagate the ideas of communism. We must take advan-

tage of these changes, but it is highly irresponsible to suggest that De Klerk has had some miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus, and that he is now committed to majority rule.

The SACP's decision to open up its list of members is a mistake. It will open the party to attack by the state, especially if we take into account the continued existence of all the major organs of repression. In fact, I would like to use this interview to make an appeal: the Party should reverse its decision.

JC: Well, the democratisation process is far from certain, a number of our party cadres have already been assassinated in De Klerk's "new South Africa". But we believe that by functioning openly our Party is able to carry out its duties more effectively, whatever the risks. We turn to the working masses for our defence and protection.

But you have not fully answered my question. I can see an argument for remaining clandestine in regard to the enemy, but there is often an allegation that your secretiveness is more directed at subverting progressive organisations, than outwitting the enemy.

WH: You haven't let me complete my answer. I've dealt with the first aspect of our secrecy. But secondly, it is the responsibility of Marxists to fight within the ANC for Marxist ideas. It is completely untrue that the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC does not put forward its views openly. We publish our newspaper (Congress Militant), we have produced a booklet of resolutions, which we have submitted to ANC branches, hoping to stimulate discussion for the ANC July conference.

In carrying forward this work, we declare our support for the MWT openly in ANC branches, in our trade union branches, etc.

Our objective is to transform the ANC. If the ANC's membership is overwhelmingly working class, then we should fight for Marxist ideas to be supported by the majority of ANC members. We do not accept that Marxist ideas, the ideas of the working class, must simply take their place alongside other class interests. For a Marxist, the ideas of the working class are primary. In any case, for the great majority of middle strata in our country, the only way their objective problems can be solved is on the basis of a Marxist approach.

'The SACP's decision to open up its list of members is a mistake. It will open the party to attack by the state, especially if we take into account the continued existence of all the major organs of repression'
- Weizmann Hamilton

JC: As you know, the SACP sees the ANC as the essential organisational formation for uniting the maximum number of forces behind the basic aspirations of the national democratic revolution. A broad based and militant ANC oriented to national liberation constitutes the greatest immediate threat to the regime and the bourgeois class in our country. As far as we are concerned, this is, in the concrete conditions of our country, the most direct route to socialism.

But let's return to the MWT's mode of operation within fraternal organisations. The MWT was involved, for instance, in a campaign which called itself a "campaign for a democratic FAWU". But just how democratic is the MWT? How, in fact, are you structured? What enables an ordinary

grass-roots member of your tendency to have an impact on MWT policy, or on the editorial line of your publications? Do you have constitutional structures?
WH: For the purposes of production of our newspaper we have an editorial board. But we are not a separate organisation. Our mandate, so to speak, is derived from the fact that our programme is not fundamentally different from what most workers in South Africa would support.
The ideas of Marxism articulate the unconscious ideas of the working class in general, and therefore it is our duty to articulate these ideas.

JC: It seems to me that you are, then, just a loose group of self-appointed individuals who believe they have the truth in their hands. You seem to operate like an organisation. You run campaigns using the name and symbols of the ANC, but without any of the in-built democratic procedures of an organisation.
WH: We are neither a loose group of individuals nor an organisation as such. We do obviously meet. For example when we do a position paper, we organise meetings of supporters of MWT.

JC: What criticisms would you make of the SACP's present strategic perspectives?
WH: We think that the SACP has not in fact carried out its responsibility in arguing for a socialist transformation of the ANC. The ANC should be a mass working class party.

Comrades in the SACP have levelled no criticism against the leadership of the ANC regarding the handling of the Inkatha question. We believe the ANC made a most serious mistake in seeking conciliation with Inkatha. The embrace of Buthelezi has been interpreted as a sign of weakness by the state, and in politics weakness always invites aggression. The signal conveyed by the peace talks with Inkatha was that the ANC conceded Inkatha's claim to be a representative of a section of the oppressed. Inkatha is not that. It is an appendage of the state, and it is based on the KwaZulu bantustan entity. It receives subventions from the state. It has an army, a police force and governmental apparatus. There is no difference between De Klerk and Buthelezi. Today, Buthelezi threatens civil war if there is a constituent assembly.

JC: Are you saying we should never negotiate with an enemy?
WH: No. But we must recognise Inkatha and Buthelezi for what they are.

JC: What is your attitude towards the present negotiations process?
WH: We need to understand why De Klerk is negotiating. There is no question of the ruling class handing over power to the movement.

In fact, it is a complete illusion to think that we can get a parliamentary democracy as in western Europe. What we are going to have is an upper chamber with the right to veto any legislation. There will be a Bill of Rights that, with all the hypocrisy of bourgeois democracy, will protect the capitalist class's monopoly of the commanding heights of the economy. The new constitution will leave the present security apparatus intact. Cde Chris Hani, incidentally, is irresponsible, when he says that we can democratise the SADF by incorporating MK into it. The state and its security apparatus must be dismantled and displaced.

The reason why De Klerk is negotiating is that he is now representing the interests of monopoly capital more clearly. He is trying

to divide the working class, by allowing some working class representatives into parliament but within the context of what remains a capitalist solution. In other words, he hopes to divide and demoralise our working class movement, by getting some of its leadership to share responsibility and blame for the system's inability to provide working people with their basic demands. Once he has successfully divided the working class movement in this way, De Klerk will be able to return to the full-scale repression option, like Pinochet in Chile.

JC: Aren't you being defeatist? De Klerk may well have the intentions you describe, and he make succeed. But what makes you sure that we have to let him succeed?
WH: It is the SACP that is defeatist. You seem to think there is no possibility of transforming the ANC into a working class party.

JC: Do you believe that we should simply abandon the present negotiating process? Is there nothing we can do with it?
WH: We should use negotiations to expose the other side. But our strategic objective must be to mobilise the masses to take power. To achieve this possibility, many steps are still required:
• We need to build the ANC to its full potential;
• We need to concentrate our struggle on social issues - houses, jobs, education, etc.
• We need to campaign to defeat Inkatha. This means an effective propaganda campaign to expose its character and role. It means a number of effective campaigns on social questions to remove the objective conditions that allow Inkatha to recruit. We must undermine the grip Inkatha has on its terrorised supporters. And we need to arm the masses in the townships.
• In regard to MK, we say its cadres must use their experience for the benefit of mass organisation, they must train the people for self defence. ★

In their own words...

"What a terrible thing to have lost one's mind. Or not to have a mind at all. How true that is." - US Vice President Dan Quayle.

"Mars is essentially in the same orbit...somewhat the same distance from the sun, which is very important. We have seen pictures where there are canals, we believe, and water. If there is water, that means there is oxygen. If oxygen, that means we can breathe." - Dan Quayle again.

Soviet policy on South Africa

By Vladimir Bushin

Does the Soviet Union have a coherent policy towards South Africa? Vladimir Bushin cuts through some of the recent disinformation in an attempt to answer this question

Over the past two or three years, a great deal has been written in South Africa and in the West about more vigorous Soviet policies in southern Africa, and the Soviet Union's wish to assist a political settlement. They note the tangible contribution made by Soviet diplomacy to the implementation of the UN decisions concerning Namibian independence, the visit by Ambassador Vladilen Vasev to Cairo in connection with the talks between Angola, Cuba and South Africa concerning a settlement in south western Africa, or the efficient work done by Victor Andreyev, a Soviet employee of the UN Secretariat, who headed the UNTAG regional centre in Windhoek during the elections for Namibia's Constituent Assembly in November 1989.

Regrettably, reliable information about the matter often goes hand-in-hand with deliberately misleading pieces.

Back in the mid-1980s, when South African rulers had, perhaps for the first time ever, to give thought to the inevitability of talks with the ANC, they made them conditional on the ANC breaking off its friendly ties with the Soviet Union. Having failed, they attempted to sow doubt as to the consistency and sincerity of the USSR's actions, thereby trying to drive a wedge between this country and the national liberation forces.

Two examples to bear this out. In March 1989, an ANC delegation, headed by its President Oliver Tambo, visited Moscow. Its talks with the leading Soviet politicians and statesmen showed that both sides held identical views on the problems of the south of the continent and South Africa itself. The delegation had its final meeting at the Kremlin with Anatoli Lukyanov and Valentin Falin. Oliver Tambo himself said that it was his best visit to the Soviet Union.

The next morning, the BBC newscast opened with an item on the Soviet-South African meeting, but not the one at the Kremlin. It was about a seminar held outside London, in which researchers from the Institute of Africa, the USSR Academy of Sciences, took part along with colleagues from South Africa. This fairly ordinary event (many participants had met before) was presented as well-nigh a turning point in

relations between the USSR and South Africa, whereas the truly important meeting at the Kremlin was not mentioned at all. And, considering the fact that the item about the seminar went on the air two days after it had closed, one cannot help thinking that it was deliberately timed to coincide with the end of Tambo's visit to the Soviet Union so as to obscure its results.

The second and more recent example. *Soviet Review* (a South African publication) and later Johannesburg's *The Star* featured a piece by Philip Nel, one of the few South African Sovietologists, who in all earnestness discussed why 12 weeks after Nelson Mandela's release from prison he was not allegedly invited to visit the Soviet Union.

In actual fact, the Soviet leadership extended the invitation immediately on Mandela's release, and it was accepted with gratitude.

This fact was later confirmed during the meeting between Mandela and Eduard Shevardnadze in Windhoek, where they were attending the celebrations for Namibia's independence.

It is even worse when misleading information about the Soviet stand comes not from journalists or professional Sovietologists, but from leading State Department officials.

New York's *Newsday* reported on March 30, 1990 that the ANC leaders "had had `terrible fights' with the Soviets, said Herman Cohen echoing similar accounts from ANC sources who asked not to be identified... These are not comrades anymore', Cohen said."

Let references to anonymous ANC activists remain on the editors' conscience. But Hermann Cohen, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, should be better informed about the Soviet Union's relations with the ANC. These relations continue to be characterised by friendship and understanding.

Was it ignorance, or was Mr Cohen indulging in wishful thinking?

'The disinformation campaign from Pretoria, Washington, London and elsewhere is not merely smoke without fire'

But some Soviets are not blameless

This disinformation campaign coming from Pretoria, Washington, London and elsewhere is, however, not merely "smoke without fire".

Some Soviet journalists, researchers and even diplomats occasionally feed these false inferences, helping those who wish to find "proof" of a changed Soviet attitude to the liberation struggle in southern Africa.

Let us have a look at some samples, refraining, however, from naming the names. The important thing is to reveal the trend, rather than point a finger at personalities.

A Soviet paper claimed, for example, that "for a long time we have had a distorted view of what is actually happening in South Africa". But who is this "we"?

Of course, our expanding social, political and scientific contacts have helped us to get a better idea of South Africa. But I

believe those who had made a serious study of that country before and kept in touch with members of the liberation movement, will not change in principle their views on the situation.

It is sad to come up against incompetence multiplied by time- serving, by the wish to declare everything done or written by predecessors a mistake. One of the reasons for this may be that we are suddenly getting people who regard themselves as instant specialists on South Africa, a highly complex and contoversial country, requiring a great deal of time and effort to understand.

For instance, after Nelson Mandela's release, in an interview with an "expert" in African affairs, a reporter supposedly specialising in the same field asked whether Mandela might not act as a go-between for the South African government and the ANC. The "expert" replied with a great deal of assurance: "This is very probable". One must have a very hazy idea of Mandela's political views and the situation in South Africa as a whole to envisage him, not as the head of an ANC delegation, but somewhere "in-between".

There is also an approach which reminds me of the old joke about people who create difficulties for themselves for the sole purpose of heroically overcoming them. First the stand of the liberation forces is misrepresented, and then subjected to criticism. For instance, in an article dealing with "efforts to resolve the deadlock" in southern Africa an author wrote with an air of disapproval and irony: "Of course, some political figures believe even now that the more blood goes into the foundation, the more solid the edifice of the people's happiness will be." He did not specify who those figures were, but the subject of the article made one think that the reference was to the leaders of the struggle against apartheid. Needless to say, this is a gross misrepresentation of the ANC's perspective on struggle and on armed struggle.

The "new experts" are also suddenly discovering that "the socio-political map of South Africa has proved more complex and controversial than we (*again, who is this "we"? - VB*) could visualise. The record shows that apart from the African National Congress, undoubtedly one of the leading forces in the revolutionary process, there are numerous other organisations influencing the anti-apartheid movement". But the existence of "numerous other organisations", and their ability to influence various processes, is not a new discovery in the Soviet Union. In South Africa, a country whose internal situation is marked by both the clash and convergence of interests of different classes, social, ethnic and racial groups, there has long been a variety of political and sectoral formations. Incidentally, a detailed analysis of the forces adhering to the ideology of black consciousness was made ten years ago by Alexei Markarov in his book *The Struggle of the African People in South Africa*, and that of organisations operating in the black townships, by V Gorodonov in the book *The Black Citizens of a White Town*.

Is there a revolution around the corner?

One of the Soviet "experts" on African affairs writes patronisingly and sarcastically that in the years preceding perestroika some "optimistic scholars", as he puts it, "argued not even about the possibility but about the actual date of a revolution in South Africa". But is sarcasm in place here?

One ought not to represent a revolution as something that happens in a matter of

hours by means of a resolute assault. What if one looks at a revolution as a lengthy process, in the course of which the liberation forces gradually consolidate their positions and force the government, sooner or later to make fundamental concessions? It may be more correct to talk, not about the growth of a revolutionary situation, but about a revolutionary process unfolding in a variety of forms, and even about its being close to its logical end - the transfer of power. If you fail to take into account the impact of armed pressure brought to bear by the ANC (which in itself was not enough to topple the regime, but served as a catalyst for mass action), political strikes and the defiance campaigns, you will never understand why FW De Klerk, who not so long ago was a more pronounced right-winger than his predecessor, PW Botha, "suddenly" agreed to start talks with the ANC and accepted most of its preconditions.

Current Soviet policy towards SA

1. **All-round support for the ANC alliance**
2. **Greater contact with all anti-apartheid forces**
3. **Promotion of a political settlement**
4. **Sufficient contact with Pretoria to ensure peace in the region**
5. **Maintenance of United Nations sanctions**
6. **Create the basis for future relations with a democratic government**

Is there a coherent Soviet SA policy?

With perestroika there has been much talk about "new political thinking" in the Soviet Union. Some political scientists have tried to encapsulate this "new political thinking" in universal, all-embracing terms. As for me, I prefer the definition given by Nodari Simonia: "an ability to see things as they really are" - to avoid wishful thinking, to discard ready-made patterns, and to base oneself on the realities of life.

Approached in this way, the "new political thinking" is yielding particularly good results in regard to Soviet policy on South Africa. Even in the past our policy was clear and consistent enough. In fact, it is surprising to hear not only western but even some Soviet Africanists say that the USSR has no concept of relations with South Africa.

Let me try to formulate its principal points.

First, consistent support for the struggle to eliminate apartheid and all-round support for the ANC which is leading this struggle, and for other anti-racist organisations.

Second, expanding contacts with all the forces in South Africa critical of apartheid.

Third, promotion of a political settlement in South Africa, not only as the best way to abolish apartheid, but also as the only solution that will prevent mass human, material and moral losses.

Fourth, contacts with the government in South Africa that will help attain the above-stated objectives, as well as durable peace and stability in Angola, Mozambique and southern Africa as a whole.

Fifth, maintaining, at least at the present stage, sanctions against Pretoria as authorised by the United Nations. Sanctions can only be revoked when the process of political settlement has become irreversible.

And, finally, laying the basis for eventual full-scale relations between the USSR and a democratic South Africa. As the sad experience of establishing economic contacts with independent Namibia shows, such work should start well in advance. ★

Strengthening the Party: The key to Soviet stability

By Mike Davidow

Mike Davidow, US author and journalist, has lived and worked in the USSR for the past 13 years. This is an abridged version of a talk delivered to the Moscow organisation of the Communist Party in December 1990

If someone had told me five, ten years ago, that anti- communism would raise its ugly head in the Land of October, that Lenin's statue would be assaulted by howling mobs (as in Lvov), cheering every blow struck at it by a huge metal ball; that the very existence of the USSR would hang in the balance; that the name "communist" would be uttered as a stigma by many, including former members of the party; that in many Republics, the CPSU would no longer be the ruling party; I would simply have laughed and exclaimed, "You're crazy!". But this is the reality today.

How did this come about? What are the objective and subjective reasons? To what extent are the mistakes and misdeeds of the past, and those committed in the five years of perestroika, responsible? The former have been the focus of attention on a daily basis. The latter have been barely touched on, without sufficient deep-going, frank analysis. The full answer can only be supplied by the collective judgement of the CPSU. I will only express my own opinion, based on my many years of experience in two worlds, yours and mine.

Distorted history

What is the distortion? It is a one-sided picture and it is a **one-sided, negative** picture of Soviet and party history that the Soviet people have been fed for five years by many leading mass circulation newspapers and magazines, and by television commentators. In its vehemence, its intensity, its determination to blacken the image of Soviet history and the party by undermining confidence in socialism, the Soviet media equalled, and in some respects surpassed, the most savage attacks in the USA during the worst days of the Cold War. It is in such an atmosphere that perestroika, the October Revolution's "second wind", has been presented to the Soviet people. They were called upon to have confidence in a socialist future of human, democratic socialism, while their past was stigmatised as "totalitarian", "a failed experiment", "a slave state"; the October Revolution a "tragic mistake" that has brought death and ruin to the peoples of Russia. Lenin was pointed to as the "source of repression". The Bolsheviks were described as "fanatic", "bloodthirsty" and "cruel" - the exact words used by the anti-Soviet press since the October

Revolution. The doors were opened wide for the distortions and slanders of Soviet and party history, long known in the US and West. The Western specialists of hackneyed, anti-Soviet slander were hailed as forerunners of glasnost. For these enemies of socialism and the party, the necessary detailing of the crimes of the Stalin years served as a prelude to the attack on their main targets: Lenin, his teaching (and now Marx as well); the October Revolution; and socialism as a utopian illusion which Lenin and the Bolsheviks forced upon the Soviet people at a frightful cost.

Anti-Sovietism, and **anti-Communism** have appeared in the USSR, sophisticated and from inside. At first it emanated from a small group of Soviet "dissidents". Now it comes from leading Soviet newspapers, magazines, TV, from ex-Communists and some who still hold party cards. "Dissidence" has triumphed in the USSR! This is how perestroika is presented in the US and the West. This step-by-step attack upon Soviet and party history has been epitomised by the demand for a Nuremburg trial of the CPSU!

Rarely in history has a ruling party opened wide such doors to its own discrediting and from within its own ranks (including members of its Central Committee). Rarely has one been so passive in the face of such slander and distortion, as the CPSU. What serious talk could there be of perestroika leading to human, democratic socialism with such an orgy of disorientation and discrediting of socialism, and the party?

Parallel to this distortion of Soviet and party history, and closely linked to it, is the confusion on the character of the Soviet state and society. The Soviet state is described as "totalitarian". This is accepted and asserted by some top party leaders (who have forgotten or dismissed the comprehensive, analytical speech of Mikhail Gorbachev on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution). It is characterised as "oriental feudal despotism", "barracks socialism", "anything but socialism".

Lenin, say the neo-Mensheviks, made a ghastly mistake and Plekhanov was right, when he warned that Russia was not ready to "bake the pie of socialism". This, they say, is the source of the terrible suffering, repression and all the problems of today. The mistake has to be corrected. How? By returning to capitalism! And here they cherish the naive illusion of a Scandinavian solution! Underlying such thinking lies an eclectic, non-dialectical approach to socialism. Before Marx, socialism was coneived in utopian terms. Marx gave it scientific substantiation as an inevitable stage in the development of history - not in mechanistic, determinist

terms, but dialectically. With the October Revolution, it ceased to be just a theory. It became part of human history. This was its historic significance.

The socialist revolution did not first occur in the more advanced, industrial states as was anticipated. This gave rise to a dispute in the ranks of socialist-oriented parties. The Mensheviks, the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Second International refused to accomodate to the Bolshevik Revolution - that ran counter to the timeframe ordained by history. Theirs was a dogmatic approach. Lenin's was truly creative. He understood that history moved in its own way by its own laws. He recognised the enormous difficulties this "confounding" of history imposed on the people of Russia and the Bolshevik Party. He explaiend why and how the revolution first came to Russia; that Russia was the weak link in the capitalist chain; and that conditons had matured for revolution first in Russia. Why, Lenin asked, cannot we use political power to make up for the backwardness imposed on us by tsarism?

Thus Soviet socialism was born, struggled and developed under the most difficult condtions, not only as a result of Russia's internal backwardness (in itself enough of a burden), but because it was severely bludgeoned by the stronger, more developed capitalist world: intervention, economic blockade, and ultimately invasion by the most aggressive, fascist, imperialist country. It was punished by the Cold War, with the nuclear arms race aimed at ruining the Soviet economy.

It was out of these extremely difficult situations, out of the cultural backwardness, mistakes in pioneering the path to socialism, that tragic misdeeds developed, particularly those of the Stalin repression. It is a dis-

tortion to claim that they were inherent in the "fanaticism" and "cruelty" of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. It is, of course, a fruitless effort to try to rewrite history or second-guess it. But one may well ask: what would Soviet history and the development of socialism have been like without intervention by 14 powers, without Civil War incited by the White Guard counter- revolution, without the economic blockade? And, of course, without the Nazi invasion, the Cold War? Would the soil for Stalin repression have been so favourable? Would the difficulties of building socialism have been so great? I raise these ideas, not to rewrite history, as is so much the fashion in the USSR today, but to remind one of the enormous demands history placed on the Soviet people and the CPSU.

Behind the neo-Menshevik eclectic approach to Soviet history is the utopian demand that socialism spring forth in its "pure", perfected state or else it is not worth defending, nor is it really socialism. Like all other social systems, socialism develops in a prolonged, complex, difficult process, with negative as well as positive sides. In historical terms, socialism in the USSR is still a very young social system in an ancient land - 73 years out of 1,000! It was the failure to grasp this significant reality, that led to the false concept of developed socialism

In the dialectical approach to history, the French Revolution is considered to have ushered in bourgeois democracy, despite the Reign of Terror. The US was considered a similar democracy, despite the existence of slavery for more than 80 years after the American Revolution, despite genocide committed against the Indian peoples in numerous Indian wars! The US existed "half slave, half free" for over 80 years.

A reverse situation threatens the development of socialism in the USSR. Perestroika is aimed at raising socialism to a new and higher state, more human, and more democratic. But a "quiet counter-revolution" endangers this programme and threatens to reverse the movement of history back to capitalism in a number of Republics. In the Baltics, laws have been introduced persecuting party members, and rights of citizens, comprising 20 to 40 percent of the population, are violated. Compromises on principle have only encouraged this retrogression.

Labour productivity

In the contest between socialism and capitalism for abundance for the mass of the people, socialism in the USSR was severely handicapped from its start. In this race it had not only to hop on one foot, but with an enormous weight tied to its back. Thus, if one wanted to judge it by its ability to provide more commodities, comforts, services than the US and capitalist states, it was no contest at all. By that yardstick, the present detractors of socialism and advocates of capitalism could have condemned socialism in the USSR from the beginning. And like the neo-Mensheviks of today, there were those who called themselves socialist who did just that. It had become the fashion to ignore or belittle the achievements of socialism in the USSR. Thus, even industrialisation and the Five Year Plans, which did much to transform once backward Russia intoone of the two world superpowers, are belittled in the Soviet media. It takes a "bold" person indeed to speak of Soviet achievements today. One is immediately castigated as a "conservative" or "neo-Stalinist". In this respect, it is ironic that the transnational corporations now rush to

capitalise on many soviet achievements and are buying up Soviet "brains" at bargain prices.

These are the fruits of the "failed experiment", the "slave state". The impact of Soviet science, education, culture, literature, music, as well as soviet planning and its comprehensive system of social welfare measures - these are all contributions of Soviet socialism to the world. The much-admired Scandinavian social measures would have been unthinkable without the October Revolution and the existence of the USSR.

And finally, the entire world recognises the debt it owes to the Soviet people, state and armed forces for the defeat of Hitler's fascism. Would new thinking and the great contributions it has made to placing the nuclear genie back into the bottle, have been possible without the decades-long Leninist peace policy that guided the USSR and led to Helsinki and the eased tensions in Europe and the world?

These realities are ignored. Instead, there has been substituted a five-year long recital in the minutest detail of every Soviet ill or misdeed. One can only marvel at the fortitude of the Soviet people and their deep attachment to the Soviet state.

One of the chief objective reasons for the rise of neo-Menshevism is the failure of the USSR to keep pace with the scientific, technological revolution. As the 27th Congress of the CPSU noted, the failure to link socialism with the scientific, technological revolution, set back the USSR at least 15-20 years. Thus it lagged in the race with capitalism, for higher productivity. The US and West on the other hand, took full adavantage of the new industrial revolution. Thus, the gap in labour productivity, the ability to produce greater abundance was widened in favour of the West. In everyday needs, it made the capitalist West far more attractive.

The socialist runner stumbled badly in the race. But a runner who ran the difficult race under severe handicaps and still advanced on his rival, can yet come up with his second wind. The race with capitalism is a long-distance run (not a sprint) and the outcome has hardly yet been decided.

The attitude to democracy

I believe one of the most serious mistakes made recently by the CPSU has been on the concept of democracy. I just re-read Lenin's pamphlet *Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky*. Written in 1918, it has well stood the test of time, although the ensuing 72 years since have drastically changed the situation. Indeed, it is quite a different USSR and world! But the pamphlet's timeliness lies in that it deals polemically with questions of principle, questions which are raised again today.

The key point separating Kautsky from Lenin, is the class character of democracy versus Kautsky's defence of "pure" (in essence bourgeois) democracy. Lenin noted: "It is natural for a liberal to speak of democracy' in general; but a Marxist will never forget to ask: For what class?"

To emphasise his point, Lenin stated: "Proletarian democracy is a **million times** more democratic than any bourgeois democracy; Soviet power is a million times more democratic than the most democratic bourgeois republic."

Today, it is the Kautsky, not the Lenin concept that predominates in many newspapers, magazines, TV, Supreme Soviets of USSR, and many Republics - I would add, as well, in the CPSU. It is this Kautsky concept of democracy that led to opening wide the

channels of democracy to the enemies of socialism, of the USSR, the party, and of **working class** democracy. One has but to look at what has happened in the Baltic republics, West Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Moldavia, and what is now developing in the RSFSR, to recognise the extremely harmful effects of such a concept of democracy. No ruling class in the West has ever so surrendered position after position to enemies of the capitalist state as has been done in the socialist state of the USSR. It has reached the point where, for the first time since the Civil War, anti- communism presents a serious and growing threat, endangering the very existence of socialism.

Article 70 of the Soviet Constitution made the spreading of anti-socialist propaganda and anti-socialist activity, a crime. It became the instrument for suppression of legitimate criticism, repression, stifling of opinion, and it was correct to eliminate it. Without that decriminalisation, glasnost and perestroika would not have been possible. But the pendulum has swung to the other extreme. It has permitted glasnost and democracy to be used as the cover for mobocracy and for the physical attacks, that followed inflammatory agitation, upon the party, Soviet institutions, Soviet armed forces, militia, and Lenin's statues. It has permitted the desecration of the graves and monuments of Soviet soldiers, the formation of fascist para-military organisations. It has permitted the media - the press and TV - to attack socialism, the party and to promote bourgeois ideology.

There is, of course, no turning back. The overwhelming majority of the Soviet people recognise this fact. There is need to further extend and develop democracy - **socialist** democracy, as it was first projected, not the "new" model of bourgeois democracy. There is need for a deep discussion in the party and throughout the USSR on the Leninist concept of democracy in the light of the present situation. It is Lenin, not Kautsky - or his present-day variants - who pointed the way toward socialism and perestroika.

The largely one-sided concentration on dogmatism opened the door to pragmatism and opportunism. The very dangers with which the USSR and the party are now confronted clearly demonstrate this: the attacks upon Marxist-Leninist teaching which are in the main unchallenged by the party and its leaders, the massive influence of "de-ideologisation" and "de-politicisation" which create vacuums into which bourgeois ideology rushes.

Criticism

Perhaps the sharpest criticism levelled at the Political Bureau and Central Committee at the 28th Congress of the CPSU, was against party passivity in the field of ideology, in the face of the offensive of anti-socialist, anti-party forces. Thus far, regrettably, no serious change has been made in this extremely important field. The almost clear field thus far given to the anti-Marxist Leninist, anti-socialist, anti-party offensive is making the USSR a centre of a special type of anti-communism: **From the inside.**

It would be wrong and it would give an incorrect picture of the party and the Soviet people, to fail to mention the virtual groundswell of protest against anti-communism and the anti-socialist offensive and sharp criticism of the party leadership for its passivity, that has appeared in thousands of letters to the newspapers, TV or which have been sent to the headquarters of the Central Committee.

For some time, the Soviet people and

members of the party seemed to be stunned by what was happening. And this is understandable. Nothing like this had ever happened in the history of the USSR. Thus, the so-called "radicals", "democrats" who called themselves the Left, but who would be placed on the Right in the US and the West, had largely a clear field. This is no longer the case. But the growing danger to socialism, and recognition of where it was coming from and who was promoting it, only served to vastly increase the outcry.

What happens to the CPSU determines what happens to the USSR. Their fates are indissolubly linked. This has been the case throughout Soviet history. In the complex, multi-national Soviet state, the party has been, throughout, the backbone that held together this vast country. Nowhere in the world (with the exception of the Republic of China) does there exist such a powerful force, with such experienced cadres (17million members). It is a thought-provoking contradiction that such a mighty force has, to a large extent, been immobilised, or more accurately, self-immobilised. There is no question that, for a long time, careerism, bureaucracy, corruption - dangers which afflict parties which long exercise a monopoly of power - were eating away at its vitals.

The party today faces the prospect of a multi-party system. And it has to adapt itself to this new and difficult situation. It is clear that the welding of a coalition that could unite the Soviet people has to be the main aim. But a distinction has to be made: with whom to unite and on what basis, and whom to combat politically and ideologically. That necessary distinction has not yet been clearly made. For one thing, there has not yet been made a clear, united analysis of the class and ideological position of various parties. Different sections of the party, including leadership, have different estimates of political groupings and of such active political organs of the rising petty bourgeois and anti-party forces as *Moscow News* and *Ogonyok*.

Clarity, unity on a Party line; discipline which does not return to the former rigid, stifling of differences, are urgently needed to strengthen the weakened backbone. There is a growing realisation within the party and among the Soviet people of the great harm done not only to the party, but to the USSR, as a result of the weakening of its backbone.

There is increasing recognition that strengthening this backbone is key to achieving the stability which the mass of the Soviet people understand is necessary to end the drift to chaos and to restore order. ★

Graphic: CAP

Rob Davies offers points for debate on the topic: Rethinking socialist economics for South Africa in the light of the Eastern European Experience

Rethinking socialist economics for South Africa

By Rob Davies

There can be no doubt that recent developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have created a major crisis for Marxism and socialism worldwide.

Forces on the right have attempted to portray the crisis of the Eastern European version of socialism as conclusive proof of the inherent incapacity of humanity to develop any system of social organisation more progressive, either in terms of relations or forces of production, than liberal capitalism. Francis Fukuyama has given perhaps the best known expression to this view with his assertion that events in Eastern Europe at the end of 1989 marked an "end of

history".

This extreme form of right triumphalism has drawn criticism from a wider range of forces than Marxists and communists.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that events in Eastern Europe have faced socialists and communists with a major challenge. Many who previously looked to a socialist future, now see no viable alternative to capitalism. Pragmatism and defeatism have become rife and the ranks of ex-communists and ex-socialists have swelled worldwide.

If this tide is to be stemmed it is essential that Marxist socialists produce convincing analyses of what went wrong in Eastern Europe. It is imperative, too, that the left confronts the uncomfortable question: How much of the baby of received wisdom of socialist theory needs to be thrown out with the bath water of a critique of the particular application of that theory in Eastern Europe?

The fundamental lesson of Eastern Europe has already been digested: there can be no viable socialist project unless it is firmly rooted in a system of democracy

Lessons

The fundamental political lesson of the experience of Eastern Europe has to a considerable extent already been digested by the organised formations of the South African working class: there can be no viable socialist project unless it is firmly rooted in a system of democracy which simultaneously protects fundamental rights and liberties of individuals, respects and, indeed encourages, real pluralism, and empowers working people to participate effectively in decisions which affect their own lives. As Comrade Joe Slovo argued in his landmark pamphlet, *Has Socialism Failed?*, Eastern European socialism failed to widen fundamental democratic rights.

While some clarity may now exist about the political lessons to be drawn from the crisis of Eastern European socialism, there has been much less reflection by South African socialists on the socio-economic implications or lessons of that experience. Yet such a reflection is urgently needed. Our people's struggle has entered a phase in which questions of economic policy have become increasingly important. On one hand, as the prospects of establishing a democratic, non-racial government in the near future have brightened, the liberation alliance has had to confront some of the complexities which will be faced in struggling to translate the broad popular aspirations for economic transformation into concrete policies which will be effective on the terrain that will be inherited from apartheid. On the other hand, important forces among the current holders of economic power have become extremely active in engaging the movement in debate and in trying to influence its thinking on key policy issues. While the crisis in Eastern Europe may not have significantly undermined the basic aspiration of many South African workers for a socialistic future, it would unrealistic not to acknowledge that it has strengthened the hand of the free market lobby in our own national economic debate, not least because

an increasing number of intellectuals in the Soviet Union as well as in the ex-socialist countries of Eastern Europe have become born again converts to such positions.

If socialists and communists are to regain more of the initiative in the national economic debate, we need to produce more substantive answers about what it is that distinguishes the vision of socialism we are defending from that which failed in Eastern Europe. More importantly, while we accept that the immediate post-apartheid period will be characterised by national democratic rather that socialist construction, we need urgently to develop a specifically socialist perspective in particular policy options and measures. Our party has long recognised that there is no Chinese wall between the stages through which any transformation must inevitably pass. The kind of policy which emerges in the stage of national democratic construction will significantly affect the prospects of a socialist project in the future.

We need therefore to become more active in identifying and struggling for policies that will be feasible under the concrete conditions likely to prevail immediately after liberation and which will both lead to immediate improvements in the lot of working people and lay a favourable base for the eventual transition to socialism. This requires a degree of clarity about the kind of socialist project we envisage.

We need, in short, to begin to confront the fundamental question: What do we, in the light of the Eastern European experience, now understand by a socialist project?

The present paper will do no more than put forward for discussion a few highly tentative ideas.

It draws heavily on the pieces cited in the references.

1. Practical Lessons from Eastern European Experiences

The Eastern European experience needs to be recognised at the outset as in fact embracing more than "one" model of socialism. As well as the Soviet model there was, for example, also the Yugoslavian model which differed in significant respects from the Soviet system although it too is now in crisis.

The Soviet experience, moreover, passed through several stages during which there were different views on many fundamental issues. The short period of Lenin's leadership saw the passage from war communism to the New Economic Policy (NEP). War communism was characterised by state direction and administrative measures. Although there was at the time a certain romantic tendency to see this as a quintessentially socialist approach, war communism was as its name implies fundamentally prompted by the emergency conditions created by the civil war. NEP, by contrast, saw a return to the market mechanism, not free market policies but to an approach which emphasised interventions to shape and influence market relations. Stalin ended NEP with the Urals/Siberia method. This was followed by the institutionalisation of central state planning. NEP is conventionally seen as a step back from socialism - as a temporary retreat conditioned by circumstances. This is a view which is now increasingly being questioned (see, for example, Plimak: 1988). It was a step back from what was seen as an excessive use of administrative state action, but it was intended to enable the revolution to take two steps forward by cementing the worker-peasant alliance and permitting more effective interventions in the economy — interventions in market relations which

would win support from the poor peasantry by offering better terms than those offered by private capital.

What is now generally recognised as the Soviet model emerged after the introduction of central planning in the late 1920s. Its central pillars were nationalisation and an hierarchical and centralised system of state planning. The first step in the planning process,which remained in force until perestroika, was the formulation by the central party and state apparatus of broad political and economic objectives. A plan was then elaborated around these goals by different levels of the state bureaucracy. Targets were set and directives sent out telling them what to produce, in what quantities, from where they should obtain inputs and at what price final products should be sold.

As an economic system this model proved to be highly effective at a certain point in time in promoting quantitative growth. A heavy industrial base was constructed in the Soviet Union extremely rapidly. The Soviet Union also achieved impressive social goals - including the elimination of unemployment and the expansion of health, education and welfare services. However, the model also had several critical technical weaknesses which became increasingly apparent in more recent decades. Essentially, while the Soviet central planning system had proved able at a certain point in time to generate quantitative increases in output, it was chronically unable to guarantee either quality or efficiency. Writers have highlighted several aspects of this:

1. Developing a comprehensive national plan was a complicated and time consuming process. All too frequently by the time plans were formulated conditions on the ground had changed in ways which significantly affected their prospects of implementation. Yet the "top down" and bureaucratic nature of the planning process made modification difficult.

2. There was an information loss. Inevitably the highly centralised state planning process operated on the basis of less than full information and this hampered the formulation of effective plans.

3. The planning process emphasised quantity rather than quality. It was therefore relatively inefficient in terms of promoting innovation.

4. The system provided for little competition between enterprises except in the degree to which they fulfilled plan targets. It provided little effective incentive for either workers or managers of enterprises to raise productivity and introduce new methods of production.

5. Enterprises were subject only to soft budget controls. There was thus little penalty attached to failure and little pressure to pay serious attention to cost accounting.

A further problem of the Soviet model was that it generated what Comrade Slovo has called "socialist economic alienation". Plans were formulated by officials from above with little or no involvement by workers. Instead of increasing the common control of producers over their means of production, "... the power to control the producers' work-life and dispose of the products of labour (was) now in the hands of a "committee", rather than a board of directors. And if the "committee" separates itself from the producers by a bureaucratic wall, its role is perceived no differently from the board of directors. It remains a force over which the producer has no real control and which (despite the absence of economic exploitation of the capitalist va-

riety) dominates him as an alien power" [Slovo: 1990, p21].

The Yugoslav model differed from the Soviet model in significant respects. It did not emphasise central state planning. Instead enterprises were made autonomous and workers' councils formulated plans and took decisions about investment. There was a strong role for the market and hence the system was sometimes called "market socialism".

Webster [1990] has enumerated some of the weaknesses of this system:

1. Workers had no long term stake in enterprises - they were neither owners nor managers - and yet they made decisions about the allocation of resources. There was a great temptation to distribute profits and resort to borrowing to finance investment.

2. The decentralised system of worker self management with a strong role for the market tended to deepen regional inequalities. There was little scope at national level to correct resultant imbalances. Enterprise based workers' councils were not in the end strong enough to make managements accountable, but their presence was sufficient to inhibit tough decisions by managers. The system in short, lacked an effective industry wide or national social direction and/or involvement by working people in decision-making at these levels.

In the Soviet Union, enterprise-based workers' councils were not in the end strong enough to make managements accountable

2. Some Implications for Socialist Theory

What then does all of this mean for a socialist project in South Africa? First, it means that those of us who defend a socialist vision of the future do not have any ready made model to draw on. There are no utopias for us to simply copy. Rather we have to approach other experiences as sources of lessons - both negative and positive. Second, it means that we need critically to re-examine a number of theoretical propositions which have become part of the "conventional wisdom" of socialist theory. In this respect, it is important to note that the main contribution of the Marxist classics was to provide the theoretical basis for a critical analysis of capitalism from a socialist perspective. They did not offer anything more than passing remarks on socialist construction. Much of what conventionally passes as the Marxist approach to socialist construction derives from the Eastern European, and more particularly the Soviet, experience.

Among the types of proposition which, in my view, need serious re-examination in the light of Eastern European experiences are:

1. Those which reduce socialisation to state ownership of the means of production.

Some of the problems with this type of notion have already been the subject of discussion within the South African left. Essentially, socialisation, as originally seen in the Marxist classics, is a process in which direct producers collectively reappropriate the means of production from which they are separated under capitalism. It implies social processes in which working people

assume powers of economic ownership - the powers to allocate resources to particular uses and determine how their social surplus is to be distributed - as well as the powers of possession - the powers to organise and control actual labour processes. Nationalisation, on the other hand, is a much narrower change in property relations, or more precisely a transfer of legal property rights to a state.

The tendency to reduce socialisation to nationalisation is extremely widespread among both friend and foe of socialism alike. It takes many forms, including assertions that the essential defining characteristic of socialism is state ownership of the means of production. Such formulations tend to obscure the broader dimensions of the process of socialisation. Moreover, by reducing the process of socialisation to nationalisation only one of several possible measures to promote socialisation is privileged at the expense of all others. In reality nationalisation is a process which occurs under several different forms of state. The extent to which, or indeed whether at all, it contributes to socialisation will depend on a variety of concrete factors which need to be analysed in the context of the concrete conditions prevailing in a particular society - including the overall correlation of class forces; the extent and level of working class organisation; the capacity to efficiently manage nationalised enterprises and the extent to which nationalisation can contribute to other transformations.

2. Those that privilege state property as the highest form of collective property.

A related notion, which gained currency in a number of socialist-oriented African countries as well as in Eastern Europe, is that state property is the "highest" form of collective property.

In Eastern Europe such notions have been used to justify the de facto proclamation of official state monopolies in many sectors of the economy. In Africa they have informed practices which have, in some cases disastrously, privileged the state sector (particularly state farms) to the neglect of other forms of collective production e.g. cooperatives.

In the first place, such propositions ignore the point made by Lenin in 'On Cooperation' that other collective forms of production such as cooperatives may in fact, depending on particular circumstances, be easier to organise and more acceptable, particularly to peasant producers. More generally, they have tended to detract from the urgent need to think about how the balance of power may be changed in favour of working people in an economy characterised by a variety of ownership forms. The Soviet experience has also highlighted the stultification that can emerge when only one form of ownership exists. It points, moreover, to the importance of providing for some form of competition between enterprises, and of allowing consumers a measure of choice.

Above all, a fundamental principle that ought to govern any democratic socialist project is that collective forms of production, purporting to serve the interests of the people, should establish their predominance by responding in practice to the real needs of working people more effectively than private capitalist alternatives. This was the approach adopted during the NEP. It is based on principles similar to those which maintain that political parties should regularly be required to renew their mandate in competition with alternatives rather than have a "vanguard" status constitutionally entrenched. This does not mean, of course,

that a people's state should not render assistance and support to collective forms of production, nor that they should not receive better terms in a whole series of relationships than capitalist alternatives. But it does mean that such support should in general take the form of measures to assist and empower such enterprises to become more effective and efficient rather than interventions to curtail alternatives. A fundamental problem with notions about state property as the highest form of collective property is that all too often they have informed practices which sought to establish the dominance of the state sector through administrative action denying people access to alternatives.

3. Those which privilege directive planning by the central state over any other form of planning.

Some of the practical problems which arose in the Soviet system of planning have already been referred to above. Apart from such specific problems of application, there is also a need seriously to reflect on the relationship between the type of planning systems which existed in Eastern European socialist countries and lack of democracy in those countries. As indicated above, the Soviet system of planning was highly centralised and bureaucratic. It involved the creation of structures in which officials took decisions on behalf of people, rather than structures in which people took decisions for themselves. The fact that market relations involved a greater element of personal decision-making and choice contributed in no small degree to the spread of ideologies in those countries claiming that capitalism as a system is inherently more democratic than socialism.

Collective forms of production purporting to serve the interests of the people should establish their predominance by responding in practice to the real needs of working people

Planning will certainly be indispensable in any programme of socialist construction and a people's state will clearly have to assume a leading role in any socialist planning exercise. The challenge facing those championing a democratic socialist programme in the light of the Eastern European experience will be to devise a planning system that empowers working people to actively participate in decision-making processes and which gives greater freedom and real choice to economically disempowered people than exists under capitalism.

This formidable challenge requires thinking about a range of possible forms of planning. In particular it requires questioning a number of implicit assumptions derived from the Soviet model. For example, planning does not inevitably have to be a directive process in which enterprises simply respond to orders from officials. Planning can also involve creating incentives of different kinds and/or acting to empower selected organisations or groups of people. Planning systems do not inevitably have to be "top down" nor do they have to be based on a rigid demarcation between the tasks of conception and execution.

Planning can be organised on democratic principles and can involve varying degrees of consultation and delegation. State bodies do not inevitably have to be the only agencies involved in planning. Organisations based on civil society - trade unions, cooperatives, etc - can play a vital role particularly if they are empowered to do so. The assumption by the state of a coordinating role does not necessarily have to mean adopting commandist procedures. Coordination can be achieved through various other mechanisms.

4. Those which pose a simple dichotomy between plan and market.

Much of what has been accepted as socialist theory has maintained that the market is characteristic of capitalist relations of productions and that it is "abolished" under socialism through the plan. The "market" and the "plan" are thus seen as simple dichotomies. The first problem with such an undialectic formulation is that it fails to recognise that the market is a feature not just of capitalism but of any social form in which commodity relations exist. Since Marxist theory has long maintained that commodity relations only finally disappear under communism, such formulations provide no theoretical basis for coming to terms with the significance of the inevitable continued existence of commodity relations under socialism.

The Eastern European experience has, in my view, highlighted the urgent need radically to rethink conventional notions on the relationship of planning to market mechanisms. If it is correct that commodity relations continue to exist under socialism what have practices based on the notion that that the market can be abolished by the plan achieved in practice? In the case of Eastern Europe they have led to widespread administrative distortions of basic economic relations. More generally, such notions have tended to narrow perspectives and exclude from serious consideration some of the the most potentially significant forms of planning under socialism.

Rather than thinking of the planning process as abolishing the market, we need, in my view, to think of planning under socialism as introducing a social direction into an economy which will continue to be characterised by commodity production. As such, many of the most important planning interventions might in fact be those which aim to influence market relations or empower working people within them. The state in any society is a major player in markets. So too, at least potentially, are other non-state organisations, for instance trade unions. This provides important sources of potential influence which need to be brought into the framework of planning strategy. Working people too can be empowered to act more effectively in market relations, by inter alia providing them with more access to the resources necessary to translate needs into effective demands.

3. Conclusions

Where then does all this leave our understanding of socialism? In my view we need to root ourselves in a few conceptual propositions developed in the Marxist classics and reject all mechanistic formulae presenting socialism as a mode of production subject to the operation of rigid laws.

First, we need to return to the types of formulation put forward in the classics which saw socialism as a transitional social form combining features of a future communist society and the capitalist society out of which it emerged. An example of this

approach is found in the following quotation from Lenin's *Economics and Politics in the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*:

"Theoretically, there can be no doubt that between capitalism and communism there lies a definite transition period which must combine the features and properties of both these forms of social economy. This transition period has to be a transition between a dying capitalism and a nascent communism - or, in other words, between a capitalism which has been defeated but not destroyed and communism which has been born but is still very feeble. The transitional features should be obvious not only to Marxists, but to any educated person who is in any degree acquainted with the theory of development" [1977, p493].

Second, we need to recover a view of socialisation as a complex process in which direct producers collectively assume control over the means of production from which they are separated under capitalist relations of production. It is a process in which working people are progressively empowered to assume the powers both of economic ownership and possession.

By rooting our perspectives in these two fundamental propositions, a conceptual basis is created which allows for recognition of the basic reality that there is in fact a range of potential measures and action which can further these goals. Which are the most appropriate will to a considerable extent vary with concrete conditions prevailing in a particular society.

If we accept the above and indeed the fact that the immediate post-apartheid period will be characterised by the struggle for national democratic rather than socialist transformation, a more open and creative approach by socialists and communists to the national economic debate becomes possible.

Instead of simply raising general visions of a future society free from exploitation or putting forward unrealisable demands based on now discredited views of socialism, we should be asking ourselves what elements of transformation beneficial both to working people's immediate interests and to an eventual transition to a socialist society can be built on a terrain which will inevitably continue for some time to be profoundly marked by the heritage of the apartheid economy?

I would suggest that there are at least the following:

- First, all significant forces have been obliged to acknowledge the necessity for some re-distribution and for the basic social needs of impoverished people to have priority in a new government's economic policy.
- Second, there is general acceptance both within the liberation alliance and among substantial sections of the broader society that we need an effective, though limited state sector and that various forms of community and popular ventures should be encouraged.
- Third, the liberation alliance is programmatically committed to providing full rights to working people to organise. This is also a demand which capital, though evidently less than enthusiastic, finds difficulty in directly opposing.
- Fourth, there is widespread acceptance that democratic decision-making bodies should be established to deal with aspects of economic policy at various levels.

These are some of the areas in which successful intervention could shape the character of a national democratic transformation in a way which would lay a favourable basis for an eventual transition to

socialism. In my view the organised formations of the South African working class need to become more active in identifying priorities for programmes of redistribution and basic needs; in defining the kind of state sector we want and why and, perhaps most importantly, in giving content to demands for a democratic industrial relations system and to the kinds of democratic consultative and decision-making bodies - at national, industrial and plant level - we want to create.

The achievement of these goals would significantly change the balance of forces in the economy.

It is within our power to achieve these goals and succeeding in this regard should change the terrain of struggle and create more favourable conditions for the eventual transition to socialism.

The economic debate is now opening up. We have the possibility of intervening now in a way which places issues of central concern to the working class more firmly on the agenda. If we do not seize the opportunities now available, capital's concerns and worries will inevitably continue to dominate. ★

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Right-wing fascism in South Africa

By Donovan Cloete

A history on the birth of these groups cannot be complete without looking at the grand apartheid policy of the National Party. For much of its history, the NP was, and remains today, an organisation operating simultaneously at a number of distinct levels. Despite attempts by its present leader, FW de Klerk, to reform the NP, it remains a mass, white, racist political party bent on perpetuating minority domination.

The Second World War produced a period of very rapid economic growth in South Africa. These changes led to the expansion of the African proletariat and a rise in militancy of the African trade union movement. The biggest trade union federation, the Council of Non-European Trade Unions, claimed a membership of 158 000 workers in 119 affiliated unions.

The inability of reserve production to "subsidise" the pathetic wages of migrant labour led to fierce wage struggles in all sectors. These continuing struggles by an increasingly organised working class were supplemented by an intensification of class struggle in all areas. In this context of heightened class struggle, deep divisions emerged within the capitalist class. Capitalists were divided primarily over the question of what to do about the disintegrating base of the migrant labour system. With the United Party of General Smuts unable to secure their interest, the attention of the capitalists began to move towards the policy of extreme segregation and white-baasskap of the National Party. Capitalising on the troubles through which the country was passing and blaming them all on the integration policy of the Smuts regime, the Nationalists warned that white civilisation was in danger and fought to retain South Africa's traditional policy of baasskap.

When the talk of reform became a signal of the country's departure from Verwoerdian apartheid, South Africa began to witness the proliferation of fascist neo-Nazi Afrikaner right-wing groups. The mushrooming of these Hitlerite groups is an expression of frustration by those whose existence relied mainly, if not entirely, on the benefits accrued from racial discrimination.

"Our policy is that the Europeans must stand their ground and must remain baas in South Africa. If we reject the herrenvolk idea and the

principle that the white man cannot remain baas, if the franchise is to be extended to the non-Europeans, and if the non-Europeans are given representation and the vote on the same basis as the Europeans, how can the European remain baas? Our view is that in every sphere the European must retain the right to rule the country and to keep it a white man's country."—JG Strijdom, National Party leader.

The issue put to voters in the 1948 elections was - integration or apartheid? This ploy resulted in the National Party winning the elections. Whilst the victory was welcomed by elements of big capital and the Afrikaner working class, it brought misery and suffering to the disenchanted black masses. During the period 1948-68, the NP passed more than 150 Acts through parliament in order to bolster and strengthen white minority domination.

Influx Control

The apartheid policies of the Nationalist regime after 1948 created conditions for the rapid accumulation of capital by the capitalists and improved living standards for all whites. A policy of strict "influx control" through rigid pass laws, together with a system of labour bureaux, removed the large reserve of unemployed workers from the cities and dumped them in rural reserves.

Various segregationist measures enhanced the position of the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie and removed the threat of displacement by a black petty bourgeoisie. State support to Afrikaner capital ensured their integration on favourable terms into the emerging relations of monopoly capital.

From the early 1950s, conflicts began to develop within the ranks of the National Party between the various class forces from which it drew support. These conflicts centred on the question of which class force was the "real" representative of the Afrikaner volk. Increasingly they developed into a struggle between, on the one hand, the petty bourgeoisie of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, and the financial capitalists in the Cape. By 1960, the Cape NP was seen as the "official opposition" within the NP.

The apartheid empire splits

1960, the year of the Sharpeville massacre, marked a new phase of NP rule. Faced with mounting mass resistance to apartheid, the regime, led by HF Verwoerd launched a two-pronged strategy. Firstly, under the supervision of the Justice Minister John Vorster it greatly intensified repression.

In April 1960, the ANC, PAC and other organisations were banned; detention without trial was introduced; torture of prisoners became common practice. At the same time the "political solution" in the form of the Bantustan system was introduced.

This repression was decisive in holding African wages down to minimal levels and created the conditions for the apartheid economic boom which lasted from the early 1960s to the early 1970s. During these years, the conflicts within Afrikaner nationalism burst violently into the open with bitter and public struggles between so-called verligtes (moderates) and verkrampte (reactionary) nationalists.

Following the assassination of Verwoerd in September 1966, the new leader, John Vorster, tried to play a Bonapartist role within the party by standing above the squabbling factions and relying for his major personal basis of support on the security

apparatus, and in particular the Bureau of State Security (now the National Intelligence Service). Yet Vorster could not remain neutral as the NP underwent a serious split. He and other other leading "centrists" eventually allied themselves with the verligtes in the struggle against the verkramptes. By 1969, four leading verkrampte MPs, led by Connie Mulder and AP Treurnicht, were expelled from the NP. They formed an ultra-right wing Herstigte (Reformed) NP based on the "true Afrikaner nationalism of Strijdom and Verwoerd".

Verligte phenomenon

The immediate issue provoking the split was a modification of sports policy to allow visiting international teams to include black players. However, the verligte-verkrampte conflict was essentially a class-based struggle between those who wished to preserve the nationalist alliance of 1948 as a class alliance dominated by the interests of small farmers and the verkrampte petty bourgeoisie. The verkramptes sought to transform the ideology and politics of the NP to suit the class composition of the volk. The verligtes, on the other hand, consisted mainly of a class of aggressive self-confident Afrikaner capitalists who sought new economic and political policies.

This struggle between elements of monopoly capital and the reactionary Afrikaner working class and petty bourgeoisie, has resulted in the formation of several right-wing organisations, the first being the Herstigte National Party. Thereafter South Africa witnessed a rapid growth in right-wing organisations. It is estimated that there are more than 50 such groups in existence.

The bulk of the membership of these fascist groups are the petty-bourgeois and

Graphic: BILL DAY, Detroit Free Press

working-class Afrikaner elements whose interpretation of unfolding events is that it is a "straight forward capitulation of De Klerk to the communists and terrorists".

Ultra-right violence

Frustrated by what they term the selling-out policy of the De Klerk regime the ultra-right have declared war on the regime and the ANC.

After the unbanning of the ANC, SACP and other organisations on February 2, 1990, right-wing terror has increased ten-fold. Several racist attacks were reported in the local media.

The first attack after De Klerk's announcement of the unbannings took place in Pretoria, when the British Embassy was shot at. The Vierkleur, the flag of the old Transvaal republics, was hoisted in the grounds of the embassy and right-wing graffiti reading "Die Stryd Begin - Orde Boerevolk!" (The struggle begins - Order of the Boer nation) was sprayed on the walls.

A fortnight later, after a meeting addressed by Eugene Terre'Blanche, leader of the neo-Nazi AWB, crowds of rightwingers went on the rampage through the streets of Pretoria attacking black pedestrians and smashing cars, much to the amusement of onlooking police who did nothing to stop them. Instead, individual policemen were seen saluting the AWB swastika-emblem and cheering the rioters on.

On 9 October last year, six people were killed and 27 injured when a bus carrying passengers was ambushed by a group of right-wingers at KwaMashu near Durban. The attackers sped past the bus, carrying only black passengers, and opened fire with R1 and AK47 rifles.

Clandestine killings by terror groups like the Order of Death are just one component of ultra-right violence. In 1988, Barend Strydom, a former South African Police constable, randomly massacred scores of black pedestrians in the streets of Pretoria. This was a fanatical act by a racist, but he was to be taken up as a symbol of white resistance by the ultra-right. At the Conservative Party's Volkskongres in May last year, scores of rightwingers queued up to sign a petition for the release of the man they regard as a political prisoner.

The rise in right-wing militancy is an eerie reminder of the rise of national-socialism or Nazism in Germany in the 1930s.

Right-wing policies

The policies of the right wing bear a striking resemblance to Hitler's pure race theory. Several of these neo-Nazi fascist organisations, such as the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB), the Blanke Vryheidsbeweging and others, make use of the swastika and eagle emblems. Right-wing fanatical groups do not hide the fact that they are racist and anti-Semitic. Some of their policies include:

- the banishment of all blacks and Jews from South Africa;
- the nationalisation of all "Jewish-controlled" banks and land;
- deportation of Indians and Jews to India and Israel.

All these groups advocate strongly the vigorous implementation of the assertion of Afrikaner domination. There is a deep resentment of people of colour and Jews.

Despite the similarity in their aims and objectives the right remains as divided as ever. Attempts by fanatical leaders, such as Terre'Blanche, Treurnicht and others to rally the Afrikaner people in a united front have failed dismally.

Coup Threats

Since the unbanning of the organisations on February 2 last year, talk of unseating De Klerk in a coup has been thick in the air. Robert van Tonder, leader of the Boerestaat Party said that De Klerk's policies "leave us Boere no option but to take this land through violence, and possibly a coup."

Terre'Blanche called on Afrikaners to buy or collect weapons and to clean them. He said, "We will take the law into our own hands ... and defend ourselves with violence."

Far from jockeying for position in the negotiations process, the Conservative Party has been active in behind-the-scenes manoeuvres to unseat the Nationalist regime. It has been participating in a right-wing umbrella alliance, the Afrikaner Front, which is planning an extra-parliamentary struggle for the "rights of the Afrikaner people". An Afrikaner revolution has not been ruled out by the front. According to leaked minutes of one meeting, Professor Johan Schabort, chairman of the Front and leader of the BBB, suggested the option of a revolution as the route to right-wing power.

The leader of the AWB has recently claimed that should the situation demand, he would call on his supporters in the army and police to resign and join hands with those fighting for the 'survival' of the Afrikaner

This idea is not shared by all right-wing organistions.

The right-wing terror group, calling itself the "Order of Death" has recently come out in full support of negotiations when it announced its intention to abandon the "armed struggle". The deputy leader of the Boerestaat Party, Piet "Skiet" Rudolf, has also called on his followers to give up their arms. Rudolf, who was held under the notorious Section 29 of the Internal Security Act and subsequently released, following his involvement in a spate of raids on SADF bases, is now in the top echelons of the the AWB.

The state has taken no substantive steps to counter the setting-up of ultra-right military commandos. Journalists have been taken on numerous tours of paramilitary training camps. Several of these paramilitary groups are trained and commanded by either ex-policemen or ex-military personnel. The leader of the AWB has recently claimed that should the situation demand, he would call on his supporters in the army and police to resign and join hands with those fighting for the "survival" of the Afrikaner. It is estimated that about 90 percent of the army and police are either members or supporters of right-wing groups.

Neo fascists have stood up on public platforms exhorting the audience to counter the regime's reforms; vigilante groups are on the rampage, yet the state has done nothing but to appeal to the far-right to join the police reserve forces rather than set up vigilante groups.

The ultra-right is a real threat to the security of the state and the negotiations process initiated by the ANC. Militant extremists are extremely well-armed with licensed and unlicensed weapons and have - as pointed out earlier - support deep in the structures of the security forces. They have access to arms and ammunitions and to the

centralised communication systems of the security forces. Individuals are already using terrorism to subvert the negotiations process and look likely to continue.

There is overwhelming evidence that the far-right is contemplating the use of violence to overthrow the state. Yet nothing has been done about it.

Conclusion

To overcome fascism is a basic necessity, not only from the historical view of classes, it is also a question of life and death for every individual, a question of food, of working conditions, of life arrangements for millions of South Africans.

In fascism the oppressed people of our country confront an exceptionally dangerous and terrible foe. Fascist violence is not just directed at the revolutionary movement - but it is levelled at the working class and all its organised formations. Its victory would mean the political and ideological defeat of the workers' movement.

For this reason, the struggle against fascism must be the concern of not only the liberation movement, but the people as a whole.

A victory over fascism can only be achieved by a combined effort involving all the forces of democracy - to work as quickly as possible towards the attainment of a new, democratic state, a state whose power rests in the hands of the majority. ★

'But I saw you coming from church...'

By Bernard Gilbert Molewa

A short play with two characters: an *Atheist Worker* (AW) and a *Marxist-Leninist Party Leader* (MLPL)

AW Good morning my comrade and friend. But I saw you coming from church service last Sunday. Now what were you doing there, you being a communist?

MLPL That's a good question! Yet, as you know, the church is one of the most important social organisations where many working class people are. More so, in one organised collective.

AW Yes, but didn't Karl Marx tell his readers that religion is the opium of the people? And don't we all know that religion is based on fantasy, a matter of blind faith, and that he who is religious and a marxist-leninist at one and the same time is neither one nor the other?

MLPL Millions of people in the world today have this or that religion. For some, religion is just a matter of personal conscience. Many others regard religion as the basis of their political views. During his time, Karl Marx referred to religion as "the opium of the people" because he then saw it as a force that impeded social changes in capitalist society. It impeded the transformation of a "paid slave of capital" into an active fighter against capital. Under those conditions, it is true that a religious person could hardly be a marxist-leninist at the same time.

But you see now, the situation is ever changing. As Marx himself said, everything in nature comes into being and goes out of being in a continuous process. Under present conditions, a religious person can at the same time be an active participant in a proletarian revolution and become a marxist-leninist. What counts is the unity of all oppressed working class people in struggle, not debate about a paradise in a celestial city.

According to Lenin: "We must not only admit the workers who preserve their belief in God into our party, but we must deliberately set out to recruit them. We are absolutely *opposed to giving the slightest offence to their religious convictions.*"

AW Does this mean priests also should be admitted into a revolutionary party when they call communists "heathens and ungodly creatures"?

MLPL Those that call communists by such names are unfortunate. They are like unwatered horses that are taken to the

river, but drink not. But "if they come to us", continues Lenin, "to take part in our political work, and consciously perform party duties without opposing the party programme, they will be allowed to join our ranks in the party."

AW But right through the ages religion has been going with the strong against the weak.

Through their well conditioned promises they alienated the weak even from the object of their beliefs.

Instead of worshipping God, they worshipped the fear of going to hell.

MLPL You are quite right. But religion is also one of the oldest and most popular forms of social consciousness. And now who is the strong? In many ways the workers' movement has become strong. Religion, inspired with the spirit of democracy and human rights, increasingly throws in its lot with the working class.

Religion is not the property of the working class. It is, however, one of the flanks within which the working class must work to build a strong mass base. ★

In their own words...

"As president of the United States I carried no wallet, no money, no driver's licence, no keys in my pockets - only secret codes that were capable of bringing about the annihilation of much of the world as we know it..." Ronald Reagan in his biography, *An American Life*

YUGOSLAVIA

Inter-ethnic struggles

The inter ethnic struggles in Yugoslavia, which have assumed the proportions of a civil war in the past month, have been desired and fomented by anti-socialist forces. But they also have their roots in a complex historical and social background.

Yugoslavia has a federal constitution, with seven distinct federal republics: Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Slovenia and Croatia. This reflects the complex historical and ethnic make-up of the country.

Before the formation of Yugoslavia in 1918, Croatia and Serbia, for instance, spent the better part of 1000 years on opposite sides of Europe's great cultural divide. Croats have a catholic cultural background, and their alphabet is Roman. Serbs have an eastern orthodox cultural background and their alphabet is Cyrillic.

At the time of the First World War the present Yugoslavian territory was incorporated partially into the Ottoman Turkish empire, and partially into the Austro-Hungarian empire. In July 1917 representatives of the Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian peoples agreed to unify the country. The implementation of this resolution was made possible with the defeat of the Austro-Hungarian empire and its Turkish ally in the First World War.

Unfortunately the representative of the Serbian king, supported by Britain and France, managed to impose a centralised monarchy on the new country. The king, Alexander I imposed a dictatorship.

In the 1930s, the Italian fascist dictator, Mussolini, supported a Croatian separatist movement (the Oustachi) against the British and French backed Serbian monarchy.

In 1941 Yugoslavia was invaded by Hitler. The guerrilla partisan forces under Marshall Tito defined their strategic objective from the start: a federal socialist republic. Federalism, in Tito's conception, was the means to reconstituting the unity of Yugoslavia which had been discredited by the Serbian monarchy.

Hitler, for his part, wanted to destroy this unity. He had, in Yugoslavia, two auxiliary

forces. The Croatian Oustachi movement which he installed in Zagreb, capital of Croatia, at the head of a fascist regime. In Serbia there were the Chetniks, the Serbian royalist army. The Chetniks played a double game throughout the war, fighting both the partisans and the Germans.

Tito led a brilliant and highly successful guerrilla war against the Nazi forces. In fact, Yugoslavia was the one east European country that was able to liberate itself from Nazi occupation without direct assistance from the Soviet army.

After the war the new communist government nationalised property on a wide scale.

Nationalisation was accompanied by a tightening of economic and political control at the centre. In many ways this was similar to the Soviet model of socialism.

But the Yugoslav Communist Party broke from this model in the late 1940s, and began introducing a system of political and economic decentralisation and workers' self management. This was an attempt to avoid bureaucratic centralism, and to invest workers on the shop-floor with direct control.

How does Yugoslavian workers' management work? At each enterprise workers elect a workers' council which can veto all important management decisions, appoint management personnel, set salary scales, decide on hiring and firing, establish capital investment programmes, carry out long-term planning, and generally run the company.

In practice, this system proved to be remarkably successful at first. In the first ten years of its application, production increased faster than in any other country in the world, averaging 13% per year.

But by the 1970s the Yugoslav experiment in workers' self-management ran into difficulties. Some of these difficulties were external in character. But others flowed directly from some of the problems inherent in a decentralised, self-management system. Without a relatively strong central plan and central organs (not just state organs but also strong national trade unions), enterprise based workers' self-management in Yugoslavia has failed to overcome regional and historical inequalities based on existing natural resources and other factors. In fact, these inequalities have actually widened since 1945.

It is these regional inequalities that have played an important contributing role in the present national conflicts. It is no accident that it is the two wealthiest republics - Slovenia and Croatia that are in the forefront of the secessionist struggle. Slovenia, making up only 8% of Yugoslavian territory, is the most industrialised republic and produces 19% of the Gross National Product and 25% of exports. Croatia, covering 20% of the national territory, produces 25% of the GNP, and 23% of exports.

In the present turmoil the hand of both the right-wing Serbian monarchist Chetnik movement and of the Croatian fascist movement, the Oustachi, is apparent. One leading and conservative European newspaper has described the present problems as a "posthumous work by Hitler". ★

CUBA

'Not for lentils nor spangles'

Ever since the crisis in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, imperialist media have been predicting the imminent collapse of socialism in Cuba. After all, Cuba was supposed to be a mere satellite of the 'eastern bloc'.

The same media speculated that the Cuban revolutionary leadership was ageing, and that the new generation of Cubans would reject the revolution.

On April 4 a massive rally of Cuban youth delivered a stinging rebuff to these imperialist hopes. In one of several mass rallies to mark the 30th anniversary of the Young Communist League (UJC) and the Jose Marti Pioneer Organisation, 400 000 youth gathered in Revolution Square, Havana to listen to Fidel Castro and Roberto Robaina, secretary of the UJC.

Robaina summed up the spirit of the rally when he said to mass applause: 'Cuban youth will not sell out our nation, not for lentils nor spangles!'

Extracts from Castro's speech follow:

Fidel Castro: What capitalism has brought into the world is four billion human beings living in poverty

Young Compatriots, I always say: "I'm not going to talk", and I always end up saying something. Tonight I was saying the same thing to myself: "I won't talk today, it's an event for the youth". However, when I arrived here and saw this enormous crowd, I realised that I couldn't escape the microphone.

When Robertico (Roberto Robaina) explained to me that they were thinking of convening the 6th Congress here in Revolution Square, I said to him: "Robertico, are you sure that the Square will fill up?" and he said, "Yes, the Square will fill up." Today we arrrived here and we found the Square full, and not just full, but extraordinarily enthusiastic; a rally without large-scale mobilisations, a rally without bringing people in by bus; without bringing people in from the factories to the Square. It filled up with young people who came here on foot, walking from different parts of the city.

Because of this, we think that this event constitutes a true political feat, proof of the prestige, the authority and the influence of our Young Communist League. It is a dig-

nified response to a difficult moment, because we are not going through just another stage, we are not living under normal circumstances - we are going through a difficult period, an epoch which is not easy... for which reason this event is an example that our young people have risen to this exceptional moment in the life of our country.

At perhaps the most difficult moment in the history of the Cuban Revolution, at the most difficult moment in our nation's history, at the most difficult moment for the international revolutionary movement, at the most difficult moment for socialism, when imperialism is drunk with euphoria, when capitalism is congratulating itself, when the triumphalism of the reactionaries is everwhere, when many who used to defend the ideas of socialism have collapsed, when today there is so much talk about the market economy and many don't even know what a market economy is, that it is none other than capitalism, when many people don't even want to hear the word "socialism", when we are not just the only socialist country in the western hemisphere but the only socialist country in a good part of the world, when some people think that we are listening to socialism's swan song, our people, our workers, our young people and our students raise the ideas of revolution and socialism up higher than ever and with greater morale than ever. (APPLAUSE)

Others have collapsed and some said that the Cuban Revolution would collapse in a matter of days or weeks. Nearly two years have gone by since the first ones began to fall, and the Cuban Revolution is more solid and invincible than ever. (APPLAUSE)

It's clear that there are battles that may be even tougher than military battles and the United States is hoping that perhaps it won't even have to invade the country, that the difficulties arising or that may arise, which are more seirious, as a result of the collapse of the socialist camp or as a result of the problems existing in the USSR - a country now trying to preserve its integrity as a great multinational state, a country now trying to stabilise itself and a country which certainly has very big problems - the United States is hoping that the consequences of this situation will cause insurmountable economic difficulties for the Revolution.

The United States is dreaming that these problems will bring back capitalism to Cuba; it is dreaming that all our land will again become private property, that our factories will become private property, that our means of production will become private property.

It is dreaming that perhaps our capital and our cities will once again be teeming with brothels, gambling dens, casinos, barefoot children, beggars. It dreams that perhpas the nation can grow used to having thousands or millions of jobless people. It can see the country filled again with illiterates, without schools, without technological institutes, without the health system wich is now considered one of the best in the world.

It has the absurd and crazy idea that our country will return to the past - to a past of injustice, inequality, racial and sexual discrimination. It dreams that women can again become a sort of property in the heart of a society of classes. It is dreaming about those absurd things which perhaps the overwhelming majority of you never knew but nevertheless understand, sense,

see.

In the rest of the capitalist world it tries to seduce the peoples with its absurd consumer societies, in places where the riches stolen for centuries from the Third World accumulated. Capitalism hasn't yet created anything but sterile luxury and an incredible waste of the earth's natural resources, in order to create super rich societies where, incidentally, not everybody is rich and there are many homeless people, beggars and a lot of other evils.

What capitalism has brought into the world during centuries of colonialism, neocolonialism and exploitation are four billion human beings living in poverty, four billion human beings! Every day 40,000 children die who could have been saved.

I don't know what kind of capitalist or socialist experiences some people not precisely from the Third World lived through; but a Third World country like Cuba, which lived through all that, a country like ours which lived through centuries of colonialism, which lived through decades of U.S. domination; a country like ours, which lived through so much horror, will never resign itself to that past; a people like ours who learned the meaning of freedom, who for the first time in history learned the meaning of independence, who for the first time in history knew the meaning of national dignity and honor, will never go back to capitalism, will never go back to being a U.S. possession and colony. (APPLAUSE)

That's what you are expressing on a day like today in a rally like this - that idea that there won't be a return to the past, that idea that the United States will never again become the master of our sacred nation!

Socialism or death! Patria o muerte! Ever onward to victory! ★

LATIN AMERICA

Uniting the Latin Left

The 2nd Meeting of Latin American and Caribbean Movements and Political Parties of the Left took place in June in Mexico.

Sixty-eight organisations with diverse outlooks from 22 countries were represented. From the guerrilla movements of El Salvador, Guatamala and Colombia to the Workers' Party of Brazil, the Party of Democratic Revolution of Mexico, the communist parties of Argentine, Chile, Cuba, Colombia, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Uruguay, Venezuela and the Dominican Republic, to new organisations, like Lavalas from Haiti and the Democratic Alliance M19 of Colombia.

Under discussion was the new world order and the perspectives for Latin America in the face of the present world restructuring process under the fist of the United States.

The following are extracts from the closing declaration of the meeting:

"The primary solidarity task for us all is the defence of Cuba's sovereignty and the defeat of American imperialist plans against the Cuban revolution. It is equally necessary to defend the gains of the Sandinistan revolution, under threat since the electoral defeat of the Sandinistan National Liberation Front (FSLN), to support the significant democratic gains made by the Haitian people, to develop solidarity with the struggle of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and other progres-

sive forces in El Salvador which are looking for a negotiated political settlement aimed at eliminating the causes of the war, to support the struggle of the Guatamalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG) and its proposals for peace, to support dialogue between the Coordination of the Simon Bolivar Guerrilla (CGSB) and the Colombian government, to support the struggle for the withdrawal of US forces from Panama, to back the anti-colonial struggle of the Puerto Rican and other colonised peoples of the Caribbean, and to reject military intervention in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Colombia by the United States under the pretext of a `war against drug trafficking'."

Looking back at the 1980s, the 68 organisations described it as "a period of crisis and global restructuring of the international economy. Military dictatorships disappeared in a number of countries. In these countries and in others new space was opened up for political activity, permitting the creation, in the midst of the crisis, of new social movements."

The meeting called for "a new democratic international order which respects national aspirations and meets the needs of our people.

"For such a democratic order to be developed it is essential that the working class and the broad working masses have the decisive role in this process." ★

The red flag flies high

THE RED FLAG IN SOUTH AFRICA. A popular history of the Communist Party 1921-1990. (Published by the SACP, Johannesburg, 1990)

I approached this book as an ordinary reader, because where history is concerned that's what I am. I am not an historian. The book is directed at the ordinary reader. It is called a "popular history". It is therefore valuable, welcome, because it is offering the people of South Africa information about the party and its history which they have been deprived of during 40 years of illegality.

I think the most valuable and interesting aspect of the book is its treatment of the central question: the evolution of party theory to deal with the specific situation in South Africa. How the theory of colonialism of a special type eventually emerged.

It starts from the beginning, and shows the difference between two kinds of South African worker in the 1920s. There was the first generation black proletariat arriving in the city from the countryside. There were European immigrants, some of whom had a socialist background and brought socialist ideas with them. There were other white workers with negative, racist attitudes.

The party was faced with the theoretical problem of adapting European socialist theory to deal with this situation; to answer the needs and aspirations of all the oppressed; and to show the link between national and class oppression.

This story runs like a thread through the

book, and I think it is told well. The book shows how the theory of colonialism of a special type arose out of searching and controversy among disparate elements within the party.

Also, the book deals well with party journals in the short space available. Something is shown of what needs these journals were intended to satisfy. The relationship between them and the development of policy within the party.

But there are omissions, it seems to me, that should not have been made, even in a short history.

For instance, the words "Stalinist" and "Stalinism" are used. The Communist International is said to have imposed its line in an increasingly "Stalinist" manner (p21). The Soviet Union is said to have been led into a stagnation by "the heavy hand of Stalinism" (p.61). But there is no further clarification.

We should be trying to define exactly what is meant by "Stalinism". When we use the word we are referring to a certain kind of suppression of democratic procedure, a style and approach that prevents the rank and file from taking its proper place in decision-making.

How did it arise in our party in the 1930s? Was it all the fault of the Third International? Was it a reflection of that same controversy and disagreement within the party that led the party paper to close in 1938 after 23 years? We have to answer these questions, not avoid them.

The book is rich in anecdotes, in personal reminiscences - like those of Ray Simons. This material goes to make it alive and interesting. But there is sometimes a lack of balance in all of this. Little is said, for instance, about Moses Mabhida - that man of keen intelligence, an orator and poet.

There is no recognition of the Indian workers in Natal, and party chairman Yusuf Dadoo is not mentioned.

Finally, some comments on design. There is some beautiful use of logos and fillers, and (as on p15) some good use of interesting captions and marginal notes. There are also some fine archive pictures, too numerous to mention here. But there is sometimes repetition of photographic material which should have been avoided. — **MJ**

Why do we study history?

Do the distortions of history drive you mad?

What you need is the Party's own guide to the study of history, soon to be published by Umsebenzi Publications.

This simple guide to historical materialism will be on sale from the middle of August. Contact your nearest SACP office for details (addresses are on the back cover of African Communist).

A television breakthrough

HLANGANANI. A short history of COSATU. (Produced by VNS, Johannesburg, 1990)

As changes begin to take place in South Africa, one of the most difficult arenas of struggle comes under the spotlight. Information, and more importantly broadcasting, has always been under the iron-fist control of the apartheid state. The SABC and the film industry have always served the interests of big capital, who also have been in cahoots with the state.

Joe Slovo, at the Fourth Cosatu Congress, stated very strongly that it would be very difficult for negotiations to begin, with the SABC in the manipulative hands of the apartheid state. At the rally in Durban, after the African National Congress's 48th Congress in July 1991, Nelson Mandela stated that most of the press, and particularly the SABC, had not changed and were still propagating the ideas and policies of the apartheid state. If the government were serious about change, this untenable state of affairs had to end.

With these calls in mind, let us examine a small entrance into this arena of struggle. Cosatu commissioned the Video News Services (VNS) Collective to make a film on the history of Cosatu. This was to be screened at Cosatu's 4th Congress. Cosatu's policies on communication included the belief that the power of the mass media is enormous, in fact that radio and television were more powerful than the print media, as a large percentage of South Africans are unable to read. VNS embarked on this huge task, to make a film covering many years and complex issues.

Cosatu had in the meantime engaged the SABC in discussions around the using of radio airtime for its members. The issue of television came up. Cosatu and VNS approached the SABC with a view to screening Hlanganani on one of its channels. The new head of TV2/3/4, Madala Mphahlele, reacted positively, assuring Cosatu and VNS of a slot. In the light of his appointment, and the importance with which he viewed the workers' struggle, a broad agreement to screen the film was reached.

On the face of it, this does appear as an inroad into the monolith that is "His Master's Voice", the SABC. However, one must examine the detail in order to see that the struggle is far from over, and that the end of apartheid broadcasting has not yet been reached.

Compromises

Cosatu commissioned a 55 minute programme on its history. The SABC initially appeared open to this idea, but as discussions progressed, it became clear that certain compromises had to be made. They wanted a 26 minute programme, which when faced with an extremely rich and

detailed history, allows the filmmakers only a broad sweep of the canvas. This apparently was the only way to go if one wanted prime time television, that is between 6pm and 9pm.

On viewing the final cut of the film, the SABC approved the film, but required two changes, without which, the film could not be screened. They thus still want to retain control, even if they are beginning to open up. The mere screening of the film can be seen as a victory. But one should not be fooled by their attempts to appear liberated, as like the government, what they are doing is changing in order to remain in power.

The film was eventually screened on Tuesday 23 July, a day before the Cosatu Congress began, a major coup for Cosatu and the liberation of the airwaves. However, unbeknown to Cosatu and VNS, the SABC screened a 3 minute anti-Cuban and anti-socialist film immediately afterwards, apparently in an attempt to defuse and "balance" Hlanganani. Fortunately, this propaganda was so obvious and ridiculous, it was laughable and in fact very amusing.

The responses received by Cosatu, VNS and the SABC have been very positive, most people wanting to see more of this type of television in the future. Criticism has centred around the lack of womens' issues being dealt with in the film.

For the first time workers were able to see their own history represented in a way that allowed them to articulate their hopes and desires in an open and critical way. As we have seen, the struggle is not an easy one. The control of the airwaves has to be fought for and won.

The apartheid government will hold on to this very powerful medium as long as it can, hiding this by privatising and commercialising the SABC as fast as it can, so hoping to retain it in its own hands. Like all other arenas of struggle, the democratisation of South Africa's airwaves will have to be taken from the regime. — **Jeremy Nathan**

Understanding Inkatha

I watched the recent SATV *Agenda* programme in which a panel of four ANC comrades faced a live studio audience in Durban. It was just a few hours after the end of the ANC Conference.

John Bishop asked cde Jacob Zuma, our newly elected deputy secretary general, a question about Inkatha. I don't remember the question exactly, but it went something like this: "Do you admit that Inkatha has a constituency, and is it a legitimate liberation force?"

In my own opinion, cde Zuma didn't give an adequate answer to the question. He correctly agreed that Inkatha does have a constituency, but he also gave the impression that it represents the oppressed of our country.

Now, I'm not pointing fingers or blaming the comrade. All of our ANC panellists on that particular evening looked very exhausted. And they must have been after a very tiring conference. I think, however, that the unclear answer reveals a common lack of clarity on our part about Inkatha.

Let me say what I think is the truth about Inkatha.

• Inkatha does have a following, which is not nearly as great as it claims, but it is not insignificant. Inkatha has the right to exist as a political formation, and to present its policies and perspectives.

• It is right for the ANC, the SACP and COSATU to enter into various political relations with Inkatha, as our alliance is presently doing in the context of the church sponsored peace process. We do the same with the National Party and its government.

• Inkatha's constituency definitely includes oppressed black people. But this does not mean that the policies and perspectives of the IFP in any way represent the oppressed, or a section of the oppressed. Many workers in Britain vote for the Conservative Party. This does not make it a working class party. The IFP, in political terms, is now to the right of the apartheid government. Objectively it is an instrument of the white ruling bloc and of international imperialist interests. The recent Inkathagate scandal merely underlines this point.

This is not to say that there are not contradictions both within Inkatha and between Inkatha and its local and foreign backers. We should note these, and benefit from them. We should appeal to all patriotic members of IFP to come to their senses.

The recent revelations of SADF bandit murder squads posing as Inkatha should tell them that their white paymasters are only interested in using them for their own purposes.

But above all we must not confuse ourselves.

The IFP is not a liberation movement with whom we have some minor political differences.

The sooner we realise this clearly, the sooner will our approach and handling of relations with Inkatha be more politically correct. — **PZ, Mpumalanga.**

Why is the Party so shy?

Why is the SACP being so shy about its members elected to the ANC NEC? I am a party member, and I am proud to be one. I joined the SACP in the days of the underground. I know that many people who are trying to count communist heads on the ANC NEC are doing it for reactionary reasons. But let's face it, the most democratic ANC conference ever, showed great support for SACP aligned comrades. Instead of celebrating this victory, we seem to be walking on tiptoe. — **MM, Pimville.**

... and so quiet?

Since the build-up to the ANC conference in Durban there have been unprecedented attacks on our Party by the class enemies of the working people.

We know we should not expect much from these self-proclaimed advisers. But the ultimate effect of these attacks will certainly have a destructive effect on the immediate objectives of the SACP if we ignore them. Very few statements or responses have been issued to contain the disturbing anti-communist missiles launched against our Party by our elected spokespersons.

I find this deafening silence on the part of our spokespersons quite disturbing.

Many people will think that what is said by our class enemies is true if we don't challenge their attacks. We must defend our belief in the ultimate triumph of communism with all the resources at our disposal.

The working people must also be on the alert against people who profess to be their allies. They must try to find out where these sudden sympathisers come from and since when they have been sympathetic to them as a class. Remember, these are the same people who called the ANC all sorts of names during the armed struggle, forgetting that the very armed operations were carried out by young members of the working class of South Africa.

I therefore call upon our spokespersons at all levels (particularly the HQ) of the Party to unleash our counter-attacks with the necessary might these attacks deserve.

Press statements must be issued regularly and press conferences must be called to clarify our position on what we actually stand for. — **Tshepo Sibanyoni (SACP Jabavu Branch)**

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